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CONSTITUTION

THE LONDON FILM SCHOOL, a 'Company Limited by guarantee' registered as a charity with the Department of Education and Science, is a non-profit making organisation which was founded to provide intensive professional education in the art and technique of film-making. Heads of Departments, Course Directors, instructors and lecturers are themselves creative film-makers, technicians or critics and historians of the cinema. The school is a member of the Film Schools Association, the organisation which co-ordinates professional film education in this country, and is also an effective (full) member of C.I.L.E.C.T. (Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision)—which performs the same function internationally. General policy is laid down by a Board of Governors which also meets with student representatives at least three times each year.

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DATES

COURSE 63	1st October, 1973
COURSE 64	14th January, 1974
COURSE 65	29th April, 1974
COURSE 66	30th September, 1974

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TIME, DECEMBER 11, 1972

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NFT

Programmes
20th July—
18th September 1973



JOSEPH LOSEY

Joseph Losey RKO in the Thirties Val Lewton The Actor as Director Jazz in the Movies and A Season of Independent and Experimental Film

During the programme period July 20th to September 18th the National Film Theatre will present six main seasons, plus a number of 'special events' and John Player Lectures. All the seasons mentioned will be spread between the 520-seater NFT1 and the 165-seater NFT2. It is hoped that the Joseph Losey retrospective will be the most comprehensive yet mounted, including as many of his 23 features (before *A Doll's House*) that are presently available. The Val Lewton season, comprising twelve of his famous productions (by directors including Jacques Tourneur and Robert Wise) should

provide an interesting adjunct to the recent *R.K.O. in the 40s* season, and the forthcoming *R.K.O. in the 30s*, which will comprise some 30 features in prints only available from the National Film Archive. Titles include *Our Betters* (Cukor), *Alice Adams* (Stevens), *Stage Door* (La Cava), and *The Woman Between* (Litvak). *Jazz in the Movies* promises to be an unusual event and will include an appearance by Humphrey Lyttelton and his Band, an All-Night show, a number of feature films with jazz scores, and the bulk of the programmes devoted to shorts, including many

rarities and several premieres. The longest season—comprising some 50 features—is called *The Actor as Director* and takes a look at those actors, not normally 'behind the camera'. Titles include *Night of the Hunter* (Laughton), *First Love* (Schell), *Night Games* (Zetterling), *The Shrike* (Ferrer), *Das Verlorene* (Lorre), *Home at Seven* (Richardson), *Dead Image* (Henried) and *On Approval* (Brook). The John Player Lectures should include Angela Lansbury, Joseph Losey, Humphrey Lyttelton, and Jeffrey Richards on *The Cinema of Empire*.

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Editor: Penelope Houston
Associate: David Wilson
Designer: John Harmer
Business Manager: John Smoker

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SIGHT AND SOUND

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On the cover: Bob Fosse in Stanley Donen's musical 'The Little Prince'

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Writing in *Declaration* in 1957, Doris Lessing thought she saw a new spirit hovering behind the lace curtains of post-austerity Britain. 'I am convinced that we all stand at an open door, and that there is a new man about to be born, who has never been twisted by drudgery; a man whose pride as a man will not be measured by his capacity to shoulder work and responsibilities which he detests, which bore him, which are too small for what he could be; a man whose strength will not be gauged by the values of the mystique of suffering.' The same anthology of credos included an essay by Lindsay Anderson, characteristically entitled 'Get Out and Push!', which castigated the society into which this new man would be born: the stultifying mediocrity, the philistinism, the smug, directionless self-display of a little England still intoxicated with the illusion of Great Britain.

'But one thing is certain: in the values of humanism, and in their determined application to our society, lies the future. All we have to do is to believe in them.'

These brave new words were of their time, and many of their references specific. Developing and generalising some of the themes he had launched a few months before in his SIGHT AND SOUND polemic 'Stand up! Stand up!', Anderson aligned himself with Osborne and anger, attacked Amis and Wain and the whole spectrum of the pseudo-liberal intelligentsia and their 'flight from contemporary reality'. Sixteen years have intervened and left their mark. Osborne no longer writes letters of hate to England; the New Left is cocooned in self-perpetuating obscurantism; Free Cinema is a memory. Words like 'affirmation' and 'commitment' and 'belief', ubiquitous at the time, appear to have lost their currency. Except that to read Anderson's *Declaration* essay (from which all the quotations in this article are taken) without its contemporary allusions is to read a remarkably accurate diagnosis of a malaise as virulent now as it was then.

And in the wake of *The White Bus* and *If . . .*, a first impression of *O Lucky Man!* suggests that Anderson's views, in their essentials at least, have not changed. Knock down the Aunt Sallys and up they pop again, good as new. So what has changed? Well, the new man of 1957 would have embraced those 'values of humanism', might even have been making films like *Thursday's Children*. But in 1973 he's been mutated into a lucky man, learning how to play the game by the rules, journeying from illusion to a smiling acceptance of reality.

The journey begins in a coffee factory. The modern Everyman, Mick Travis (Malcolm McDowell), is a trainee salesman, watching conveyor belt automata pack Nigerian coffee into plastic bags so that it can be shipped back to Nigeria. Mick is an innocent, but no Don Quixote. He has ambition and good looks, and he already knows how to use them. Promoted from the ranks, he sets off for the North, encountering on the way his first lesson in life in the shape of two corrupt officers of the law. Several lessons later, after a season with provincial worthies and small town graft and a brush with Special Branch interrogators when he stumbles into an atomic research establishment, Mick's progress from innocence to experience takes him South again, following a pause for refreshment at the breast of Mother Church.

Riskily avoiding a nasty fate at the hands of a mad professor who transplants human heads on to pigs' bodies, Mick finds refuge with a travelling pop group, whose constant companion happens to be the daughter of a financier and property tycoon, filthy rich. Made the scapegoat when this respected entrepreneur's arms deal with an African police state encounters a last-minute hitch, Mick emerges from prison a new man, the milk of human kindness overflowing after a thorough immersion in the *History of Western Philosophy* and similar uplifting works. The fires are dampened after a brisk rejection by the ungrateful lower depths, and all looks hopeless until a stroke of luck in Leicester Square finds him at a casting session. Picked out of the crowd by the film director, Mick sees a blinding flash of light when Lindsay Anderson hits him over the head with a rolled-up script. Invited to smile, he smiles. The moment of illumination has shown him the way to the stars. Everyone assembles to celebrate the news: 'You'll be better by far/To be just what you are/You can be what you want/If you are what you are—and that's a lucky man!'

There was a modest genesis to this contemporary morality. David Sherwin, who wrote the screenplay, describes in an introduction to the published text* how the idea developed from Malcolm McDowell's own story about his experiences as a coffee salesman. With prompting from Anderson, this sketch for a modest comedy was fleshed out into the epic form (and at three hours, epic length) of *O Lucky Man!*. Something of the original survives in the coffee factory sequence following the credits, which is funny, sharp, knowingly and precisely accurate after the fashion of the establishing scenes in *If . . .*. But the epic ground has already been prepared. 'Once upon a time,' prompts an opening title, and an iris out takes us into a sepia-toned silent fable about a coffee plantation worker (McDowell) and the awful consequences of being caught stealing beans. Into the present, and the first of the film's many references back. A moment's hesitation (haven't I seen you somewhere before?) as Mick talks to one of the girls on the packing lines, played by Christine Noonan, the tigerish girlfriend from *If . . .*; some confusion over his name—Travis, not Travers like the hero of the previous film. You make what you like of these and similar incestuous jokes (Arthur Lowe, provincial mayor of *The White Bus*, is the same here; the interrogator at the

atomic plant asks Mick about being expelled from school), beyond their obvious reference to the continuity of Anderson's work. But since the allusions are there, it may be worth pursuing them.

The end of *If . . .* was widely interpreted as a revolutionary gesture. Perched like Vigo's children on the school roof, Mick Travers mowed down the Establishment figureheads and then turned his gun on us, passive connivers in the system's fraud. The year was 1968, and the time was ripe. But if you do read *If . . .* as a call to arms—and most people did—you have to ignore some visual evidence in this last scene. The headmaster was shot through the head and vanished in a puff of smoke, but didn't he rise up again (like the bayoneted chaplain emerging from a cupboard drawer) to lead the forces of reaction? If memory serves, the headmaster was in any case shot not by Mick but by his earth spirit girlfriend; Mick was always the dreamer. This reading of *If . . .* at least makes sense of the film's parade of emblematic clowns. Fools they may be, but pillars of an Establishment so pervasive, so entrenched, so encrusted with hierarchic ritual that peashooter assaults like Alf Garnett and *Private Eye* and even schoolboys totting bren-guns can be taken in their stride. Mick's revolt was no revolution but a futile anarchic gesture. And far from being a departure from *If . . .* and its message, *O Lucky Man!* confirms it. As Mick walks towards his brief encounter with humanist affirmation among the down-and-outs, he passes a slogan on the wall: 'Revolution is the opium of the intellectuals.' It begins to look as though he didn't mean exactly what people took him to mean when Anderson called *If . . .* 'the writing on the wall'.

'We can no longer afford the luxury of laissez-faire, and if we try, we are going to find that it is the most pernicious elements that come out on top.'

The targets in *O Lucky Man!* are every bit as foolish as they were in *If . . .* and just as pernicious, though less foolish and more pernicious the higher up the social scale they are. Mick's pilgrim's progress unveils a gallery of connivance, sycophancy, petty corruption and wholesale roguery. On the first floor there is the coffee factory chief executive, suave, pompous ('Who's my man? Can you sniff him?'), handing Mick an apple as he sets off for the North; the chicanery of provincial officialdom, crowded into a steamy outhouse behind the mayor's hotel to leer at a strip show (echoes here of *This Sporting Life* as well as *The White Bus*); the police, nasty, brutish and venal, but knowing their place when it comes to arresting the fall guy. Higher up come the supercilious interrogators, firing loaded questions at Mick as Dandy Nichols wheels in the tea; the politicians, faceless whites and fascist blacks, wheeler-dealing over napalm to keep the peasants down, swallowing their distaste for the whole nasty business by calling it 'honey' as they sip champagne. In a room to himself is the mad doctor, dreaming of a genetic heaven ('We have a Mongol in here who can't tie his own shoelaces. By the end of the summer he'll be a contract bridge champion'). And at the top of Centre Point is the system's masterwork, plutocrat Sir

*Plexus Publishing, £1.25

James, reeling off an instant obituary when his chief researcher plummets through the window, savouring his own malice as he picks up one of the phones in his brandy-stocked Rolls to blackmail a transatlantic underling.

All these characters ('humours', as Anderson calls them) are set up to be laughed down. The idiom is comic, and the epic form accommodates it; the totems are wheeled on, and there's neither time nor motive to look behind the paint. Despite, or perhaps because of, his training in the British documentary tradition, Anderson in his films has always sought to go beyond the limited naturalistic zone and into realism, in the Brechtian sense of showing not real things but things as they really are. There were indications of this in *This Sporting Life*, his first feature; but his fondness for the episodic structure, where the effect derives from the accumulation of loaded detail rather than from any linear narrative progression, goes back to his early documentary films, much influenced by the Jennings method of assembling from fragments. The impressionist tensions of the early documentaries are now modulated into Expressionist oppositions. Mick gives his prison pay packet to a Salvation Army meeting, and the idealist gesture is immediately countered by cynicism as two bystanders pick his pockets. The film is constructed on such oppositions; and on a formal level at least, their imprecision represents—as Anderson said of Ford—the Johnsonian 'grandeur of generality' rather than the romantic's 'glorification of the particular'. Which is not to say that the film's particular detail is not often familiar and precise.

The episodes are often divided by black-outs, a device which emphasises their equal significance as parts of the whole. The limbo between sequences is occupied by the film's major Brechtian device, in the form of Alan Price and his songs, ironically detached from and obliquely commenting on the action. There's a nice reflection of this detachment when Alan Price, appearing in the film as himself, sits apart from the rest of his group in the dormobile which picks up Mick after his escape from the research clinic; though this intervention in the film seems more of a distraction than a workable distanciation effect. A couple of lines from Alan Price's final song ('So it's on and on, and it's on and on/Around the world in circles turning') provide both a comment on Mick's circular travels and also an echo of the film's second major formal device, the use of the same actors in several roles. Arthur Lowe is as good in blackface as the African dictator Dr. Munda as he is as the bumptious factory manager and the oily provincial mayor, and Ralph Richardson's duet as a rundown tailor mouldering in Mick's northern hotel and the engagingly supercilious tower block tycoon is a tribute to his versatility; and so on down the cast list. But if this trick is no more than a diverting way of indicating that life's encounters are merely permutations on the same 'humours', it begins to pall when it finds Mick double-taking minor characters. The theatrical manner is obviously helpful when the lines these Royal Court actors speak are so charged; and it says a lot for Malcolm McDowell's marathon perform-

ance that he contrives so many variations on reacting.

If there is a woolly internal logic to this multiple role-playing, it's less easy to place the film's more peripheral distractions. It might be granted that the occasional but specific echoes of *A Clockwork Orange* (Mick wired up in the research clinic, from which he escapes by diving through a window; the reforming prison experience; the name De Large on his salesman's order pad) reflect the similarity between two heroes of our time and their various transformations. But the film anthology items, from the opening silent film pastiche (complete with Eisensteinian expanding titles) to the *Olvidados* tramps who round on Mick's unwanted charity, seem no more than off-the-cuff conceits.

A somewhat larger conceit (Fellini-like in effect if not in intent) is reserved for the end, when after Mick's enlightened smile cast and crew come together for a celebratory dance, director embraces star, and 'while others dance away the chance to light your day' Mick/McDowell chases balloons, an image which—surely unintentionally—suggests that he is still reaching after illusions. The smile would belie this inference, but the smile is the problem.

'But the real question remains unanswered. If "Land of Hope and Glory" is to be decently shelved, what song are we to sing?'

There is a clue to Mick's smile in an earlier scene. Mick's progress as a salesman ends when the road runs out at the wire fences of the atomic research plant. As he stands on his car roof and peers into the distance for a guiding star, Mick's car radio is tuned to a programme about Zen and the moment of illumination ('to understand life, to be with life . . . living now'). This mysterious moment is the beginning of a reconciliation with the self in relation to the other, the wisdom of self-awareness. Its magical qualities have been portended in the various talismans which Mick acquires on his journey to experience—the apple at the coffee factory, a golden coat from the tailor, a book of cheering texts from the prison governor. The signs are not to be taken for their meaning; we learn later that the golden coat is nylon, and Mick's quotations from the book are everywhere scorned.

The path towards knowledge is bathed in Biblical light as Mick escapes from the atomic plant: blinding flashes as the plant explodes, a scorched and windswept heath, gathering darkness—then suddenly the gloom disperses, there is a refreshing stream for Mick to drink from (a magic spring evidently, as Miroslav Ondricek's camera lingers on it after Mick has passed), and down in the valley below an idyllic pastoral scene like some mystical vision of Eden before Adam. The church in the valley denies Mick the harvest festival food of God (traditional religion is no salvation), but his rebirth is confirmed as the vicar's wife gives him suck (a whole line of enquiry could be followed on the recurrence of mother figures in the film). 'There's nothing in the North for a boy like you,' the woman tells him, and Mick, bearing a staff and guided by children, sets off for the South.

It's a haunting, magical sequence, but its imprecision is revealing (if the Church denies him, who are these angels guiding Mick to the motorway?). According to the car radio, Mick's smile of acceptance is a transcendental state of wisdom. The implication is that the only way to come to terms with life's absurdity is to laugh at it. Affirmation is difficult when it's mocked by the absurdities of everyday reality each time you open a newspaper. So laugh and the world laughs with you. The laughter is comprehensive. Another item heard on Mick's radio is about mental hospitals; one of the films which Dr. Munda and his aides show to clinch the 'honey' deal graphically illustrates the effects on the human body of a brief exposure to the substance; Mick as crusader fails to stop a woman preparing to kill herself in a crumbling tenement. But this, it appears, is just life in its infinite variety, and it's the whole of life that Mick's smile accommodates.

Perhaps, though, it's not so comprehensive after all. Mick discovers a reconciliation with himself and the world's idiocy; but it's also of course Malcolm McDowell, auditioning with books and a gun, on his way to star in *If . . .* Life's like that, if you're a lucky man and not the tenement woman about to discover her own kind of reconciliation with the world as she sees it. But people are nasty, and the nastiness of human nature makes no distinctions of class or circumstance. The meths drinkers, now joined by Sir James' carefree daughter (Helen Mirren) and her titled boyfriend, turn on Mick as cynically as he was turned in by his friends at the other end of the social ladder. They don't want charity of any kind, soup or stirring passages from *The Lower Depths*. It's when the generalities become particular that the ambiguity of acceptance begins awkwardly to impinge; and to imply a process of selection which certainly isn't natural.

Rachel Roberts, reeling off her shopping list of cabbages and 'baked beans sometimes' and scrubbing her floor, houseproud to the last, before she turns the gas taps on, appears earlier as Gloria Rowe, the coffee factory public relations siren who first asks Mick to smile. As Mick watches open-eyed, Gloria quotes Blake: 'A sincere belief that anything is so will make it so.' Blake's 'contraries', the innocent dream and the experience of reality, have often found echoes in Anderson's films. Just as often the attempt to balance the opposites, the artist's obsession with finding a unity in the variety of experience, has led to ambiguity, sometimes expressed as compassion edged out by bitterness. The Covent Garden porters ('those good and friendly faces') of *Every Day Except Christmas* are balanced by the savage vision of *O Dreamland*, and it's not simply a cry of shame for the place and its meanness because the people are also ugly ('the typical, unimaginative, phlegmatic smugness of the British working class,' as Anderson described the men at the factory gates watching the *March to Aldermaston*). There is no trace in *O Lucky Man!* of that sentimental view of hard-bitten market lorry drivers seeing through the night with the National Anthem; but what seems to have replaced it is a mean-spirited perspective on the essential nastiness of human nature.

There is an unappealing sanctimonious

edge to this comprehensive spite, a condescension which extends even to those ideals which no one would defend. Mick tastes justice from a judge who retires for a spot of flagellation while the jury deliberates; the prison governor who sends Mick into the world again is mocked not only for his vanity but because he also plants a kiss on Mick's forehead. It's difficult to see the relevance of private perversion and public idiosyncrasy for itself; but somehow here there is a flavour of Profumo and the hypocrisy of gratuitous contempt. Acceptance is not conformity, Anderson insists. But if all it means in *O Lucky Man!* is a woolly-minded coming to terms with the world as it is, it's a cold conclusion from an angry man.

So where have we come in the sixteen years since Anderson promised to 'fight for the notion of community' for those good and friendly faces? It's interesting to find that when the London *Evening Standard* serialised the *O Lucky Man!* script, there was no ambiguity about the meaning of 'acceptance'. Mick has just taken his blow on the head:

For a second there was a blackout. And in that second, a state of waking alertness seized me. Like having your head cleaved spiritually. And I saw that the world I had travelled through was incomprehensible, that I wouldn't ever understand it, that I wouldn't ever unravel its secrets, that the things people did in it or had done to them would never be more important than the fact of the world.

I knew in that monumental jolt to my consciousness that it was wrong to think of changing the forces of the world. One must use them to re-direct oneself, to bend to their bidding. The path of knowledge is a forced march through the world and I had had beginner's luck.

This version of the illuminating moment may not of course have the director's imprimatur. But Anderson has not repudiated it, and everything he has said about this final scene suggests that this is how he would read it himself. The medium is not necessarily the message; Mick's acceptance need not be Anderson's and he need not endorse it. But though interpretation must be an individual choice, in Anderson's avowedly personal cinema what is being said is usually synonymous with the way of saying it.

Commenting on the separate directions of his films and his work in the theatre, Anderson has welcomed the cinema's challenge 'to go beyond the easy naturalism and get back to the expressiveness and variety and the sense of style that there was in the silent cinema.' Hence the epic form of *O Lucky Man!*. But of course the epic form is a convenient vehicle for the non-specific, for rounded synthesis rather than pointed analysis. If Anderson's films have often expressed a conflict of opposites (in critical terms, the need for commitment on the one hand, and on the other what, writing in *Sequence*, he described as 'the willingness to jettison our own prejudices and viewpoints and accept those of the artist'), the resolution of that conflict has often appeared to involve some adjustment one way or the other. Trying to extract a unity from apparent irreconcilables is the artist's prerogative; but the danger of the cosmic view is surely that the ice between truth and truism is very thin. And in *O Lucky Man!* the dice may be loaded from the start, in the very choice of a



The Anglo-African 'honey' plotters: Malcolm McDowell, Arthur Lowe, Ralph Richardson

salesman—with all the ready-made connotations of that profession—to undertake this journey of self-discovery. Selling plastic bags of coffee is already quite a step towards accepting that the world is mad and you'd better believe it.

The satire of *O Lucky Man!* often looks familiar. Because it's apposite, or because that's the way we're used to seeing it? The Establishment as a joke looks a jaded notion for the Seventies, particularly when one recalls that in the British cinema it's as old as *Private's Progress* and *I'm All Right, Jack* and the like. Looking back at Anderson's mid-Fifties writing, it's noticeable that his

critique of the state of the nation was usually expressed in negative terms, an attack on what was rather than an advocacy of what ought to be. And so it is in *O Lucky Man!*. If 'fighting means commitment, means believing what you say, and saying what you believe,' as Anderson said at the end of his *Declaration* essay, after sixteen years it would be useful to have a clearer definition of the nature of those beliefs. A definition which might have come more convincingly from a position closer to what Doris Lessing called her *Declaration* article: the 'small personal voice' rather than the easy generalities of an epic panorama. ■

Director and pop group: Lindsay Anderson (left), Alan Price (right)





Robert Phillip Kolker

ANGLE AND REALITY



GODARD AND GORIN IN AMERICA



'We feel that we have very little to say to each other. Nevertheless, we are in a system, a star system—this is a temple of culture, we are the big priests, and you are, I don't know what . . . or I do know what you are. The real contradiction, and we can't resolve it, is that we have nothing to say to each other, and here we are in front of each other dying to say something, and the only game we know is the question and answer game. I don't know how to deal with it any more, but we still deal with it. We just feel obliged to stay because of the money.'

*Jean-Luc Godard, Jane Fonda,
Jean-Pierre Gorin*

Last October, Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin toured the United States with *Tout Va Bien* and *Letter to Jane: Investigation of a Still*. *Tout Va Bien*, with Yves Montand and Jane Fonda, is their first 35mm 'commercial' feature (see SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer, 1972). *Letter to Jane* is a 45-minute, 16mm 'essay' on the news photo of Jane Fonda observing the devastation in North Vietnam. It is an exercise in Barthesian semiology, a study in cybernetics, a history of the cinema, a Marxist critique of popular culture.

What follows are Godard and Gorin's remarks during a two-day visit to the University of Maryland. It is not a straight transcript, for I have taken considerable liberties in changing phrases into idiomatic English (though some of the flavour of their speech comes through) and collating various statements into groups.

Before Godard and Gorin left we took them to the student supply store where they bought University of Maryland sweatshirts to see them through the Paris winter. Outside Godard showed me a telegram he had received from a friend: TOUT VA BIEN. JE T'EMBRASSE. He pointed to the half-page of Western Union code that preceded the message. 'Look at all the information it took to get the one line of information meant for me. I could make a film on this telegram.'

You've said about your past movies that you were a bourgeois film-maker and they were bourgeois films.

GODARD: It was a mistake for me to say that. Now I must say I'm still a bourgeois movie-maker, I'm still a star, but I want to be a different kind of star...

GORIN: But the thing is that Jean-Luc is the only one who has changed cinema in twenty years. He was the only one to accept new ideas because he made the earlier films. Our relationship works because I have been able to raise for him and for myself questions about his previous films, discovering things in them that can help us go forward a little. *Tout Va Bien* is full of quotations from Jean-Luc's previous films. It's considered a very Godardian film. In fact, the Godardian things were made by me. It's a normal thing because the new always comes from the old.

We think the split between documentary and fiction is false. Everything on the screen is fiction. That's what Dziga Vertov proved in the newsreels of the Bolshevik revolution. The term *cinéma-vérité* comes directly from Vertov, but he was mistranslated. The term he used was 'Kino Pravda'. 'Pravda' in Russian means 'truth', but it was also the title of the Bolshevik newspaper. What Vertov meant by 'Kino Pravda' was 'Kino B.'—'B' as in 'Bolshevik'. Vertov was really making fiction movies, using elements of reality, as everyone does. There is nothing closer to fiction than a Nixon speech on TV. A horrible fiction, but a fiction which has some kind of reality.

GODARD: What is real is your relation to this fiction. That is why we prefer to speak in terms of materialist fiction today, as opposed to idealist fiction. We can describe *Tout Va Bien* as *Love Story*. This is the real title. But we have tried to do a materialist *Love Story* which opposes the idealist *Love Story* that you may have seen on the screen last year.

GORIN: We have been asked what we think of current American films, which is like asking what we feel about New York. It's the same question. We've seen two films, *The New Centurions* (title in UK: *Precinct 45—Los Angeles Police*), which is a casual fascist white movie, and *Superfly*, which is a casual fascist black movie. We were really scared to death and really impressed. It's rather frightening to be in America and see a black audience in San Francisco reacting the way

it reacted to *Superfly*, or to see a white audience reacting the way it reacted to *The New Centurions*. And as long as France is a colony of the States, we are really afraid of what's going to come up at home.

Tout Va Bien

GODARD: What you learn from *Tout Va Bien* depends on your background and your condition of life. We like to consider the screen as a blackboard, a white blackboard. On this blackboard we have put three elements, three social forces, which are represented by three 'noises'. The management, the voice of the boss; the CP voice; and the leftist voice—I don't like to call it that, let's say the voice of the far-out people. These are the three social forces at work in France today. We have taken those three noises out of reality. We didn't invent them, we just assembled them in a certain order. In fact this movie is just a newsreel. In a way we summed up the last two years in France in an hour and a half.

GORIN: *Tout Va Bien* is simply done, though it's not explicit. The events in the supermarket sequence really happened. One

'*Tout Va Bien*': 'They discovered a certain tradition of acting which was built up in the 1930s popular film in France'

week before we shot the supermarket sequence the CP was selling its programme in the very same supermarket. Three months before we shot the sequence the leftists looted a very fashionable store and distributed the goods in the suburbs of Paris. Those are the elements. We made, for the first time, a very realistic film. But what kind of realism, and how did we achieve it? We achieved it through a certain process of 'disrealisation'. That's why the film is full of theatrical metaphors; it is a highly Brechtian film in that sense. It was a way to cope with the tradition of, let's say, *Salt of the Earth*, which is the basic tradition film-makers have when they want to deal with social evils. But getting simple doesn't mean getting more explicit. For example, we think of our overcrowded soundtracks in terms of social music, connecting together noises which we hear all the time, trying to disconnect the normal links we're subjected to through TV, newspapers, and so on.

The whole film is done by contradictions, contradictory traditions of acting. The real stars are not Jane Fonda and Yves Montand, but the twenty extras who play workers in the factory sequence. Those were people who had never acted. They discovered a certain tradition of acting which was built up in the 1930s popular film in France. You have a guy playing like Gabin, a girl plays like Arletty. You have a guy who plays like a character in Jean Vigo's first film. The same thing happens with the actor who plays the boss. He is a film director and a Brechtian actor. We don't intend to make a buffoon out of him. What we intend to show is that those kinds of speeches, that are delivered every day on TV—Nixon acts almost like our boss—don't bother us. Suddenly in a film you realise that they are crap.

Doesn't the Yves Montand character stand for Godard?

GODARD: What you still have in mind is the myth of the author. Because I'm a star, people always relate Yves Montand's monologue to me. In my life as a movie-maker, I relate more to Jane Fonda's monologue, when she says she can no longer write such





'*Tout Va Bien*': Jane Fonda. '... we can only direct her in Paris'

crap for the newspapers, a statement that came from Jean-Pierre's life as a journalist.

For *Tout Va Bien* we were strongly backed by Jane Fonda and Yves Montand. With their names and mine we could raise quarter of a million dollars, which was the biggest budget we've ever had. We needed it to make a picture for a 'larger audience'. But we completely failed in the distribution of the film in France, so we are doing this tour of the States. At least in ten cities we can meet ten people.

Letter to Jane

GORIN: For us there are maybe five interesting minutes in this film, which is the distillation of the very old experiment made by Kuleshov at the beginning of the Russian revolution. To us it's a way to reflect about framing, about camera angles, about things that have completely disappeared from movies today. We were asking questions all the time, both of Jane and of ourselves. *Tout Va Bien* more or less gives answers to these questions. One of the questions about Jane had to do with this: you are coming to France to make *Tout Va Bien* with us; you just made *Klute*; after *Tout Va Bien* you are going to make another *Klute*; and maybe you are going to Hanoi. Along with many film-makers and people in the media, we wonder if in order to go to Hanoi you have to make *Klute*. Maybe to make *Klute* is the wrong way to go to Hanoi. That's one of the problems we are trying to settle in *Letter to Jane*.

Could you have replaced the photo of Jane Fonda with an unknown?

GODARD: Not at all. The North Vietnamese don't need unknown Americans to say 'peace in Vietnam'. They need very well known people because Nixon is not an unknown American. The star system is very important. You think of yourself as the star of your own life. Maybe it's not a movie that is processed, sent to the lab, but every day you are building something, you have a certain programme for yourself, you are your own computer, a kind of marshmallow machine. Each morning you code yourself, programme and computerise yourself. You star yourself in your own movie. You are also the photographer, the actor, the extras, the lab.

You criticise the expression on Jane Fonda's face. What would you rather have her do?

GODARD: I'm not the director in Hanoi. We can only direct her in Paris. We asked Jane to come to France in order to act in something staged by us, which was titled *Tout Va Bien*. Two months later the North Vietnamese asked her to come and play in something they staged, which was entitled 'Victory over America'. In *Letter to Jane* there are two pictures, the old Jane Fonda and the new Jane Fonda. We have to see the differences between the old and the new because we are interested in differences. In the still the old and the new are together and we don't see the differences. This is an aesthetic, this is a movie dealing with aesthetics understood as a category of politics. We prefer to speak of aesthetics and no longer of politics. We are only interested in knowing about a kind of expression. If I were in Vietnam, looking at a dead Vietnamese child, I would have exactly the same expression, as would Nixon and John Wayne.

We feel very strongly that people today have completely lost the power of seeing. We only read, we don't see the image any more. It was Dziga Vertov who said we have to see the world again, to learn and to teach people how to see the world. He said we have to see the world in the name of the proletarian revolution. We can't put it that way today. The term 'proletarian revolution' in our country has become so misused that we prefer to say we are interested in aesthetics. We are trying to invent, to find new forms to fit new content. But new forms and new content means you have to think about the old relation we are still dealing with between form and content.

We want to communicate. But we ask what do we want to communicate, what do we have to communicate, what are we receiving as a communication? We can deal with the million dollar picture by making a film with two stills. The North Vietnamese, the Vietcong, invented a two-still war against the million dollar picture war of the Hollywood Pentagon. For many years we have been saying that sometimes you can do films with a very few things, just two or three stills and a cassette. So we thought it was a good opportunity to show that it was possible to make a feature-length picture, featuring the Vietnamese war, featuring Jane, featuring the North Vietnamese, and featuring our view on these things. It was done in one day—of course the writing took two weeks, but the shooting was done in one day, the editing took another day, the processing another day, and the money is made back in one day, here. The picture cost \$500, and for coming here we receive \$1,000.

GORIN: It's a highly commercial picture! And it is distributed by us. In Palestine, during the shooting of the film we made two years ago, we discovered a doctor in the south of Jordan who was making films with stills. Each week he received some stills from Amman, from El Fatah, edited them, put black spaces into them, made his own commentary in front of the people. He was a real film-maker. That's the possibility we have.

You have spent one hour looking at a film about a still you would normally look at for two seconds. I think we could have spent ten hours on this still. Looking for two seconds at the still there are a million things happening. The media, information, is something very effective. It leads you to be

the way you are in your life, the way I am in my life. I live in a world where I'm subjected to a thousand sounds and images a second. I want to see how this works. That's the question raised by *Letter to Jane*. I could have spent the time doing a film on an ad.

GODARD: A one dollar bill.

GORIN: People have said cinema is emotion or emotional involvement. What kind of emotional involvement? Suddenly you see on the screen somebody who has the same pieces of the same puzzle that you are using all the time. Film is a way to disconnect the normal links of the reality we're subjected to. There is nothing more abstract than an image or a sound, but this abstraction comes out of a certain reality, and this abstraction may drive you back to your own reality. That's why we make films that drive an audience back, so that looking at the film they can pick up maybe one, two, three elements and try to deal with them in their life. That's the feedback effect.

Videotape

Have you had any experience with videotape?

GORIN: We're puzzled by it. We've seen people in the States freaking out on video. We have a strong feeling that video has nothing to do with film. It is something very specific and we have to think about that specificity. People who are using video right now are bringing in the worst things from film-making. This person is shooting me right now and I think he's having a big CBS trip, nothing more. He's making a CBS movie. He thinks that when somebody is speaking he has to shoot him.

What do you suggest?

GODARD: Stop!

We think we can use videotape to communicate to people.

GODARD: To communicate what? What kind of information? We can't speak of information *per se*, in heaven. In our still of Jane Fonda we have seen how in information there is a process. There is a very strong relationship between the cheapness and the cost of information. This is cybernetics. You have very few ways of working with video in other than movie terms, and you have to know that movie terms are determined by TV terms, by the relationship of millions of TV sets. There was an American scientist, Shannon, who put down general ideas about information thirty years ago. He said there is a transmitter and a channel and then another transmitter and then a receiver. In the channel, the cable for instance, is where the noise is. What we are aware of is the noise. For us as movie-makers the noise is not merely something technical, it's something social. The social noise coming from North Vietnam for twenty years has changed the way you receive your own life here. It's channelled differently.

GORIN: We've seen one interesting videotape. It was made by a friend of ours working in a Lower East Side school in New York. It's called *The Visit of the Chinese Ping Pong Team to New York*. This guy gave the Sony equipment to children. Because they are only so high, the only thing you see on the screen is pants. The media were all there, CBS, NBC, and you hear on the soundtrack people saying, 'Why the hell are those kids

running around?' That's the media.

GODARD: Perhaps the most interesting thing with video is that you can grab the camera easily. But if you can grab it more easily, maybe you can put it down more easily and think about it better.

Camera Angle

GORIN: Nobody knows why we are using certain forms. Why at a certain time did we raise Dziga Vertov's name when he was almost unknown? He was eclipsed by Eisenstein. For instance, Eisenstein thought of himself as the inventor of montage, but in fact he was inventing camera angles. At the same moment, Vertov was inventing editing. They were not inventing montage and editing by chance. They invented those things because they were related to something, which was social turmoil, which was the Russian revolution. The so-called inventions of Griffith, like the close-up, were only a very traditional, psychological, emotional approach to reality. In that sense it wasn't an invention. The notion of camera angle has totally disappeared from the movies. We have only positions of the camera, which is not camera angle. The camera angle is really a cut into reality.

GODARD: An angle is just a crossroad. It's a point. You think of an angle only in terms of an opening. In order to open you first have to enter at a very precise point, as at a crossroad. Then you have your choice of a new road. I can describe it in a more mathematical way: there is a flow, a direction. You want to stop at a point in the flow because you are tired. You want to change direction. The angle is a cut through reality, like a boat in the sea. In terms of society, this is what a revolution is, the making of a new cut, a new way of going through reality. The Bolshevik revolution invented a new angle, a new way of organising life.

When we study the history of Griffith we see that he was searching for something when he invented the close-up. It was not only that he needed to be closer to the girl he was fond of, or something like that. It was because, fifteen years after Lumière, he needed a way to cut through reality. But since there was no revolution in the States he was completely alone. He was, in fact, a reactionary. He could only invent a change of camera position. He needed editing, because when he invented change of camera position he realised that he had two shots instead of one. He had to assemble those two shots. But his editing was only parallel, two actions at the same time. Parallel is not the same as crossroad, the lines never cross each other and so there is no angle.

Eisenstein was not working with editing, he was just putting an angle after an angle. At the same time Vertov was really dealing with editing—let's not call it parallel, but perpendicular editing, crossroads, pieces of reality that come across each other. Two images are made to cross each other not to be followed by, but to build a third image. But because of the difficulties of the Bolshevik revolution—and we have seen what has happened in Russia—Vertov and Eisenstein were opposing each other. Vertov praised what he called the camera eye and Eisenstein praised what he called the camera fist. Each one denied the importance of the other. Four years ago Eisenstein's reputation

was so high in the West that we had to be too dogmatic about Vertov and raise him too high. Now we discover that in reality those two men were the two hands of the same body. Just as in the German revolution of the 1930s Bertolt Brecht and Wilhelm Reich were the two hands of the same body. But the body was cut and the two hands never really worked together.

GORIN: It may look very abstract to you, but to us it's part of the day-to-day questions. For four years we decided to cool down, slow down, to make only stationary shots, make flat films and try to work out the white screen as a blackboard, a white board. In *Tout Va Bien* we have been able, for the first time, to use a tracking shot. *Tout Va Bien* uses only two forms: the stationary shot and the tracking shot. We know perfectly well why we use the tracking shot at this particular point. We can speak about our films and explain in very simple terms how they are made, why we used that image, why we framed it that way, why we used that form after that form and for what purpose. Those are basic, practical questions. After three years we are rather tired of flat films and we are going to work on camera angles. That's why we're talking about it.

GODARD: For the first time we can answer the question of how we are related to the workers. If we were doing a movie at the time of the May-June events, our way of being related to ordinary people, the so-called masses, was to go back to zero, to a zero point of movie-making... not to pan, or track, or zoom any more—which I've done a lot of times, and I think better than a lot of other people. I was not happy with those techniques because I discovered they indicated no relationship with reality. Then I felt obliged to go back to the steady position, to the medium and steady shot, because this is the way ordinary people with their Instamatics shoot when they take family pictures on holiday. Now we discover that these ordinary people, these real people, are moving, they are inventing new forms of struggle against the way they are oppressed, whether against the boss if they are workers,

a husband if they are women, an American if they are Vietnamese. So we can't use the steady shot any more. We have to invent a new way of making a tracking shot, even if it looks technically the same. But because we are Marxists or Maoists, what's important is the social use of technique, not technique *per se*. I discovered I need 'angle'. Then I discovered I don't know what an angle is. Jean-Pierre discovered he needed angle more than I did because he is younger and more oppressed.

In *Tout Va Bien* there are only three tracking shots. We needed a tracking shot to work parallel to the background of the three 'noises', the boss noises, the CP noises, and the leftist noise. They mix together—that's how France is made today. So we have a tracking shot looking at social evils. In the beginning of the movie we are in a factory, the place where goods are produced. At the end of the movie we are in a supermarket, where the goods are consumed. In fact the whole movie can be considered as a tracking shot in time, not in space. It begins with the production of goods and ends with the consumption of goods. Between both you have the media, the distribution. Jane plays a newspaper woman, a journalist, she sells ideas. Yves plays a man in the advertising business, selling goods directly. At the end of the movie the last tracking shot is a summing up. You hear again, far away, the three noises, and the music, a big hit parade success in France at the time. The words I suspect were written by someone like Pompidou and the tune by someone like Nixon and Agnew.

GORIN: The problem is not to be optimistic or pessimistic. *Tout Va Bien* is a joyous and ironic film. And that's what we like about it. We know why we're making films. We make films that will produce other films. So we're not very different from Paramount. There is a slight difference. They say 'We will produce a film which will produce another film which will be the same.' We say we will produce a film which will produce another film which will be different. So the next film is going to be different. ■

'*Tout Va Bien*': '... In fact this movie is just a newsreel'



THE DISCREET QUALMS OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Joseph Sgammato

If rape, poison, arson or the knife have not yet woven their delightful figures into the dull fabric of our lives, it is only because our souls—hélas!—haven't the courage for them... Hypocrite reader—my double—my brother!

Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*

Alfred Hitchcock's *Frenzy* springs to life as a brilliant picture postcard (complete with crest in upper corner) showing London's Tower Bridge. Perhaps it might have been the more famous London Bridge except that, among the many changes that have occurred in Hitchcock's thirty-year absence from his homeland, London Bridge has finally fallen down (and, helped to her feet by a group of American businessmen who also offered to pay for her passage, made a somewhat indecorous emigration to Arizona). Or perhaps not. Tower Bridge is itself a familiar landmark redolent of two colourful Englands, Henry VIII's and Jack the Ripper's, and stands, moreover, at the entrance to London when one approaches the city from abroad; it is an altogether appropriate point of entry for both visitors and returning natives.



'Frenzy': '... the director's eye and the eye of the beholder'

HITCHCOCK'S 'FRENZY'



With Ron Goodwin's ceremonious music as accompaniment, the mood is exhilarating as we approach the bridge by air, and almost playful as its great arms open up to enable us to fly right under it. As the last and most familiar credit fades our aerial tour of the Thames continues, but our attention is diverted by something down below: a crowd of people and a loud voice addressing the crowd. Our curiosity aroused, we descend to get a better view and join the mass of clicking cameras and onlookers surrounding the speaker. The voice is one of sturdy British sanity advising its audience about the urgent need to rid the Thames of its pollution ('foreign bodies'), but the speech is dull and pompous and we are as grateful as the crowd (which includes Hitchcock) when someone yells 'Look!' and we can all rush to the side of the embankment and gawk at the nude body of a strangled girl. There is much shoving and scrambling to get the best view, but we can be sure that this privilege has been reserved for the movie audience, for who else is in a position to appreciate a camera close-up?

When we speak of the camera, of course, we are speaking of an amalgam of director and audience: the director's eye and the eye of the beholder welded into a single screen image. The nosy, rubbernecking camera of the opening montage of *Frenzy* is an admission from Hitchcock that he is a thrill-seeker at heart (his is the most prominent of the gaping faces on the screen) and a reminder to his movie audience that they are no better: a serio-comic blending of 'I confess' and 'J'accuse'. It is fair warning of what is to follow: not only further titillations of the peek-a-boo variety but constant reminders of the voyeuristic impulses which are all too willingly being aroused within us by the Master of Prurient Suspense, the patron saint of Peeping Toms and moviegoers.

For *Frenzy* is a story of sex and murder. Richard Blaney (Jon Finch), a former war hero down on his luck, is offered comfort by his girl friend Babs Milligan (Anna Massey), by his friend Bob Rusk (Barry Foster), and by his ex-wife Brenda (Barbara Leigh-Hunt). When Rusk rapes and strangles both women, Blaney is suspected of being the 'Necktie Murderer' and is sought by the police. Blaney turns for shelter to Rusk, who leads the police to him after planting Babs' clothes in his bag. Blaney is convicted of murder. A suspicious Scotland Yard inspector (Alec McCowen) uncovers evidence

against Rusk in time to prevent Blaney from killing Rusk in his flat after escaping from prison.

As the plot suggests, *Frenzy* contains most of the elements which audiences have come to expect from Hitchcock. These expectations are important in *Frenzy*. In fact they are, in a sense which it will be the intent of these remarks to show, what *Frenzy* is chiefly about. That we do bring certain sharply defined anticipations to a Hitchcock film there can be no doubt. Hitchcock makes thrillers: we come to his films to be thrilled. This is the unwritten agreement between us, lurking beneath the surface of which is a world of implications which might perhaps be uncomfortable to think about.

There are many who think that Hitchcock has not been living up to his end of the bargain lately. To these people especially, *Frenzy* may constitute a kind of vengeful reply. It is Hitchcock's most exciting film since *Psycho*, but one which constantly alludes to the appetite of its audience, perhaps grown too large for anyone to satisfy. I will show you what you want to see, says Hitchcock, but you must admit that you want to see it. I will cast an evil spell here in the darkness, says our not-so-benevolent Prospero, but you must share the burden of guilt with me.

Much of the vitality of *Frenzy* results from this implied relationship between director and audience. Hitchcock plays with our anticipations, showing us sometimes too little, sometimes too much of what we expect to see, but in every case drawing our somewhat ruffled attention to the expectations themselves.

For instance, early in *Frenzy* there is a scene in which a sexually predatory Jon Finch persuades his ex-wife (Barbara Leigh-Hunt) to let him come into her flat for one last drink. We have witnessed the 'All right, but just for a minute' scene too many times not to expect a quick cynical cut to a bedroom; and Hitchcock gives it to us, but the bedroom is a large dormitory in a Salvation Army dosshouse, and Finch's closest bedfellow is an old drunk who tries to pick his pocket. Those of us who had been rather complacent about the wife's emotional vulnerability are made slightly self-conscious about our complacency, and what it had led us to expect to see. Whether Hitchcock has tricked us or we have tricked ourselves, we feel to some small degree the frustration of having sinned without pleasure. To be sure, the bedroom scene has taken place, as Finch's manner when he discovers the money informs us, but we haven't seen it.

If Hitchcock has disappointed us here, he more than makes up for it in the scene which follows, surely one of the most harrowing he has ever filmed: the wife's rape and murder. The ancestors of this episode are the two most famous scenes in Hitchcock: the shower murder in *Psycho* and the aerial attack in *North By Northwest*, in both of which Hitchcock managed the difficult feat of genuinely surprising the audience. We do not expect to see so much nudity and violence in a Hitchcock film—and Hitchcock knows it—while the setting of a business office during the lunch hour provides the deceptively 'safe' environment which sets this violence in relief. Unlike

the shower scene, the sequence here is protracted, the killing slow, the effect distressing. If we have seen less than we expected in the previous scene, surely in this one we have seen a great deal more.

Again, the backward tracking shot from the door of the murderer's flat after he and his next victim (Anna Massey) have entered is ominous and amusing at the same time: a playing with form which is designed to make the audience self-conscious. The conventions of the genre have led us to expect either a cut to the inside of the flat, or a change of scene altogether, but not a shot which slowly takes us back down the stairs we have just ascended with murderer and victim. Hitchcock is not so much saying, 'You'd like to know what's happening behind that door, wouldn't you?' (for we already know) as 'You'd like to see it, wouldn't you?' He reminds us of the voyeuristic impulses which have been aroused by our sight of the first murder and which, taking the cause-effect sequence back a step further, have probably been responsible, in dark and disordered ways, for our having entered the theatre to see *Frenzy* in the first place.

The method is equally at work in the more gruesome and unrestrained scenes: we do not expect to see a nude corpse bounced out of the back of a truck in a Hitchcock film—but we do. The moment we expect the camera to turn discreetly away—as in the sequence in which Rusk attempts to open the clutching fingers of his dead victim with a pen-knife—is the moment it stays relentlessly and perversely transfixed. The audience feels both humour and horror, fascination and repulsion. Because the camera does not avert its eyes when we would, we are very much aware of ourselves at the moment, of where we are, of what we are doing, and of our capacity (perhaps larger than we thought) to witness atrocity. There can be no doubt that Hitchcock is playing with his audience as audience, by making us aware of the act (if such it can be called) of passive witnessing which is the chief mark of our identity at the moment.

When Finch is put on trial we are relegated to a position outside the courtroom trying to get a peek inside. Hitchcock is at his most impudent in quite literally shutting the door in our face at the moment the verdict is announced (and this isn't the first time we have found ourselves hanging around some shut door or window). The verdict is told to us almost immediately afterwards, but not before we have become conscious of ourselves as curiosity seekers, as uninvolved tourists in 'another country' of rape and murder.

The point is chiefly made visually, but is verbalised at the beginning of the film in a scene in a pub at lunchtime in which a doctor and lawyer discuss the series of necktie murders plaguing (and delighting) London, and remark that it will be good for the tourist trade, since every visitor expects the streets of London to be 'littered with the corpses of ripped whores.' Hitchcock plays slyly with the expectations the audience brings to the film: every moment of conventional, open shock we are permitted to feel is accompanied by a feeling of unconventional, hidden delight. The irony of his films is based on their being directed to

large, general, normal, average audiences—the tourist trade—whose observance of the conventions does not preclude a taste for murder, pathological sex and the horrific in its fictions. Hitchcock not only caters to this taste, but makes us aware of it, makes us accessories before, during and after the fact.

He knows that for years the genre of the thriller, the mystery, the detective story has served as a mask of respectability for the indulgence of sexual fantasies by the middle classes. Tales of predators and victims, particularly those involving the extreme physical crimes, are euphemisms for the language of the id, a language so forbidden it is never spoken, only heard. What are, after all, the socially acceptable forms of physical and emotional excitation? The paradoxes inherent in the solving of this essentially middle-class problem, both humorous and grim, are the very stuff of Hitchcock's films (as they are of Buñuel's).

The murder mystery story is considered eminently 'safe' (like a nun having cocktails with her brother) and indeed, in England, almost a guarantee of civilised respectability: it evokes the image of peppery virgins in their seventies (of whom Hitchcock's films have their fair share) as author, sleuth or audience, as well as frightened girls in lonely houses who have emerged from a tradition safely originating two hundred years ago. The thriller allows us to visit the Underworld on Dante's terms: motives impeccable, moral judgments comfortably predetermined, and return passage guaranteed. Hitchcock is clearly fascinated by this formula, which renders us armchair murderers and passive rapists by the hearthside with no one the wiser.

What distinguishes Hitchcock's films from others which serve the audience in the same way is that Hitchcock is aware of the secret gratifications moviegoing affords and incorporates this awareness into the forms themselves of his films. He takes the innocence out of the phrase 'escapist fare' and makes it something darker and more complex, consisting of vicarious excitements and borrowed passions and vaguely tainted by auto-eroticism. Among their other accomplishments, the films of Hitchcock may one day be found to constitute the best single gloss on the Gothic fictions which have persistently endured as a genre for two hundred years, and which have enjoyed the prominence of a vogue in two notable periods: the late eighteenth century and the mid-twentieth.

Is it a playful Hitchcock who reminds his public of their repressions in *Frenzy*? Doubtless; but it is impossible not to notice that the reminders are more insistent and remorseless than they have ever been before, the jests at the audience's expense tinged with a bitterness and cruelty which are often surprising, and occasionally shocking. In many ways *Frenzy* is deliberately disappointing, sacrificing the richness which usually softens the edges of the Hitchcock cynicism in favour of shock appeal. For example, there is no romance in the film. There are no young people in the film—everyone is thirtyish or fortyish, and they look as though they've been through the mill. The film is filled with quarrelling. The hero is innocent of murder, but that's about

the last nice thing you can say about him: he is touchy, frustrated, sour and callous—never has the Hitchcock ‘wrong man’ been so disagreeable.

Then, too, the women in *Frenzy* induce disturbing feelings of guilt in the audience, in that they are the only victims in a film which must have victims to be exciting. Has there ever been a Hitchcock film before *Frenzy* which did not boast a beautiful actress in its cast? The issue is neither trivial nor sexist: the face of a beautiful woman is as endemic to the movie screen as sunsets and chases, as Hitchcock well knows. As part of the audience’s pre-conception of a Hitchcock film, this expectation is appropriated by the director and, to put it simply, turned against us.

When we first see Finch’s ex-wife, played with great skill by Barbara Leigh-Hunt, she is seated behind a desk in a private office. She is intelligent and pleasant, not unattractive but certainly not beautiful, a capable business-woman, well tailored, a trifle starchy, and still attracted to her husband. In movie terms, she is ripe for seduction. The moviegoer, who at this point is still looking around for the romantic interest in the film (Anna Massey having been ungallantly eliminated from the start), is unquestionably disappointed by this candidate, neither goddess nor tigress. In movie terms, this is tantamount to willing her destruction. When the inevitable sex scene does occur, Hitchcock ruthlessly exaggerates our expectations, and over-compensates for our disappointment: seduction becomes rape, physical plainness becomes grotesque distortion at a strangler’s hands, unglamorous primness becomes grounds for murder. Just beneath the surface of our reaction to this scene is a subtly induced sense of connivance at its violence.

Following the murder of the wife, the warm and amusing Anna Massey becomes more attractive, and she is gratefully reinstated as leading lady, particularly after her loyal girl friend is viewed in the same frame with Billie Whitelaw’s appropriately scabrous war buddy’s wife. She provides the one moment of tenderness in the film when she puts on Blaney’s argyle socks in the hotel room scene and slips out of bed and into the bathroom. The viewer may not be altogether wrong in feeling that it is a rather uncompromising Hitchcock who takes Anna Massey away from us, and a decidedly cruel one who makes the best visual jokes of the film with her nude body in a potato sack prior to dumping her and the potatoes out of the back of a truck on to a busy highway. *Frenzy* delivers the thrills it promises to its audiences (as *Torn Curtain* and *Topaz* did not); but they pay a price for them.

Perhaps *Frenzy* catches the Master in a grumpy mood. Or perhaps the Hitchcock of this late film in a long career is like the Cervantes of the last part of *Don Quixote*, where a deepened awareness of form becomes part of the form itself, and the line between reality and Don Quixote’s imagined version of it becomes harder for the reader to distinguish since they are, for him, both fictional, and where Cervantes is no longer simply writing, nor the reader simply reading, a story any more. *Frenzy* is not simply a story told on film, but an

embodying of the politics of the film-making and the film-going experience, and of the relationship which obtains between director and audience.

What are we seeing in the murder scene in *Frenzy*? A female character named Brenda Blaney raped and strangled by a male character named Rusk. Because this is a story and because we know the film is creating an illusion for us, we know that no one is really being raped or murdered on the screen. But someone (either Miss Leigh-Hunt or a stand-in) is being forced to disrobe, to take certain positions, to perform certain actions which are, to put it most neutrally, normally considered embarrassing when not done privately. Who is forcing this behaviour? A rapist named Rusk? A very good actor named Barry Foster? Surely we are closer to the truth to say that it is the director. But if we are honest we must admit that the anonymous Hydra sitting in the darkened theatre devouring the scene frame by frame—the movie audience itself—is perhaps the ultimate reason for the spectacle, and co-author of the deed.

Is it Hitchcock alone who drops his camera for the first time below the forbidden nipple line, heretofore teasingly coincident with the bottom of the screen (in *Psycho*, *Marnie* and *Topaz*)? Or is it the increased appetite of movie audiences, whose wish is the artist’s command more truly than in any other medium? It is just as surely one as the other, and Hitchcock is at some pains in *Frenzy* to discomfort his audience into an awareness of this fact. Unlike the benevolent Prospero, who creates the illusion of a tempest but reassures his frightened daughter by saying, ‘Tell your piteous heart there’s no harm done,’ our magician unsettles us with his illusions by reminding us subliminally of our complicity in their creation.

If we are to verbalise the ‘meaning’ of *Frenzy* we must look to the politics of cinema, to the mutual dependences of film-makers and filmgoers for our vocabulary, for this is what *Frenzy* is ‘about’. To pursue other trails will lead us to dead ends. To be sure, the film is filled with the familiar signposts of Freudian sexuality: dominating women, mother complexes, diagnoses of impotence as well as frigidity, high-flown talk of the ‘pleasure principle’ and the ‘connection between religious and sexual mania’, and so on—so filled, in fact, that one may legitimately suspect a bit of leg-pulling on Hitchcock’s part.

The shot in which Rusk introduces his mother to Blaney is a case in point. The grotesque old cow with flaming hair who sticks her head out the window next to her son, the Rapist, is a ludicrous exaggeration of the Portnoyan beast-mother. The picture of these two red heads enclosed in an image of domestic bliss by a window frame with a flower-box is not only disturbing but humorously obvious, and is possibly a response by Hitchcock to the recent trend of looking for clues to a strictly sexual interpretation of his films. To those of us in the audience on the *qui vive* for fetishes and phalli, for kinky relationships and hidden Oedipal motives, Hitchcock throws a whopper: after this chillingly comic shot of a Freudian Grendel and his dam, *Frenzy* is no longer a whodunit.

This is not to say that one should pay no

attention to these signposts, but that one should not force oneself to pay attention to them, forgetting that the pleasure of the journey is itself the goal of a Hitchcock film. To observe that Rusk says ‘You’re my type of woman’ to his victims before attacking them, and to observe further that each of his victims, without exception, has reddish hair, implying perhaps that he is attempting symbolically to murder his mother, is not to miss the mark, but neither is it to have said anything very profound about *Frenzy*. To argue that Rusk’s behaviour towards Blaney has the earmarks of repressed homosexuality, with its combination of hovering concern, he-man banter and vindictive destructiveness of Blaney through his women, is to put a construction on it which is eminently supportable by the film’s insinuations, but it is not to get at the heart of the matter. If *Frenzy* is about sexual mania it has precious little to say about it, if these old chestnuts are the sum total of its insights.

The fact is that Hitchcock’s films have never been rewarding on the ‘theme and structure’ level. The usual avenues of interpretation—the development of plot and character to express theme—are closed in Hitchcock’s case. His films have structure, but not theme; form, but not ‘meaning’. Hitchcock has a great deal to show to his audiences, but nothing to say. This fact has occasioned many critical difficulties, and two familiar errors. On the one hand are those who think that since Hitchcock’s films have nothing to say, he is not a major artist, while on the other are those who think that since Hitchcock is a major artist, his films must be saying something. To Hitchcock admirers the latter is naturally the more forgivable error, but it may be the more misleading. Whatever else they may be, for example, *Notorious* and *Marnie* are not character studies; to approach them in this way is inevitably to see them as failures. *Frenzy* does not reveal much about the character of Rusk, really; it may be trying to reveal (if it is not too solemn to say so) something about us to ourselves.

Our first view of Barry Foster as Rusk is unsettling, partly because of his persistent fussing over Blaney, or his talk about his ‘old Mum’, or his Mae West imitation, but mainly because of the strange colour of his hair, which looks bleached. Despite the hail-fellow-well-met cheerfulness, there is something unnatural and disturbing about him, a feeling which is reinforced by the shot of him and his mother leaning from his apartment window, and finally given full vent by the rape and murder scene. It is perfectly reasonable to find him repellent, but we are not perfectly reasonable, and he repels only part of us. The other part is fascinated and drawn to him. Hitchcock understands this because he finds him fascinating also (and has for many years).

He provides a focus for the curiosity of his audience in the form of the murderer’s flat: we want to see this flat, we want to go inside and look around. What we really want to do, of course, is to enter his mind, and it is this sense which accompanies our view of the flat when Hitchcock finally shows it to us. Small, airless, cluttered with cheap furnishings in harsh, clashing colours, littered with unfinished food and half-



empty glasses, the flat oppresses us with its rancid vulgarity, and we are satisfied. A similar phenomenon occurs in *Psycho*, when the curiosity of Vera Miles takes her (and us) inside the rooms of that forbidding old house and for a few riveting moments makes us tourists inside a haunted mind. In the same way, Rebecca's beach house leaps in value as a visitors' attraction the moment it is revealed to have been the scene of perversions and murder, and Hitchcock's wandering camera at this moment brilliantly gratifies our curiosity about both the house and the woman.

What distinguishes *Frenzy* from these other films is that before we are given the gratification of seeing Rusk's flat, we must undergo the rudeness of a rejection: on our first visit, when Rusk is taking Babs Milligan home, the door shuts in our face and the long backward tracking shot mentioned earlier takes us back down the stairs to the noisy, humdrum outside world. In a film full of fresh and exciting touches—the use of a freeze-frame of a strangled victim's eyes to indicate the exact moment of death, the fading out of sound at the beginning of the short Massey-Foster sequence and the fading out of silence at the end, cinematizing horror as a tiny island which a sea of banality is unable to swamp—this tracking shot is perhaps the single most striking thing in *Frenzy*, and the most characteristic of the spirit of the film. Do we want to go beyond that door? Perhaps some of us do and some of us don't, but in any case all of us are forced by this shot to think, however fleetingly, about this question. *Frenzy* is not about a sex killer; it's about looking at a sex killer. Its manner is its matter.

This is not merely the inevitable distinction between film and other art forms, such as literature. There are some directors whose films can be discussed in terms of characters as well as actors, plot developments as well as camera movements, symbolism and themes instead of the immediate effect on the audience, but Hitchcock isn't one of them. Bergman is, but not Hitchcock, to neither one's discredit. Hitchcock is thoroughly a Movie Man, a Cinematiser. The materials out of which his films are wrought are those of movie-making and movie-going.

Hitchcock's heroes, for example, are characteristically handsome, innocent, vacant, constantly forced to run about for reasons they can't fathom, ignorant of the large design in which they figure, totally unaware of the forces which are controlling their behaviour: they are like actors. Hitchcock's villains are more suave than handsome, dignified, urbane, unruffled, never forced to run about, not at all naïve, totally aware of what's going on and in fact in perfect control of the actions of the others: they are like directors. Hitchcock's camera does not record subjects: it creates them. How the camera looks, from what angle and for how long, how it turns away or lingers, how it moves or stays still, in so far as this determines what ends up on the screen, and therefore in the mind of the audience, is itself the subject.

'Frenzy': the murderer (Barry Foster), the victims (Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Anna Massey), the wrong man (Jon Finch) and the detective (Alec McCowen)

Perhaps it would be clearer to say that the real subject of Hitchcock's films is the fluctuating rhythm of the middle-class imagination, the picture-making power inside the mind of each member of his audience, to which his camera approximates. Hitchcock's films are the concretised naughtiness of the imagination, which refuses to dwell on the images which Reason dictates as the soundest, best, and in closest correspondence with reality, but which summons up irrational images (as Don Quixote did) because they are more fun. His films cinematise that part of all of us which prefers hell to heaven. His is a cinema 'governed purely by the pleasure principle', to quote one of *Frenzy*'s characters. But it is also a cinema which incorporates an awareness of what it is doing into the doing itself: it transforms our imaginations into just the parade of images we want privately to see, but always with the humorous detachment of one who is on to our little secrets.

Tippi Hedren's fall off her horse in *Marnie* is a deliberately stylised rendering which is not realistic but cinematic: it makes us aware, however momentarily, that it is our imagination which is being gratified, not our sense of reality. When an upside-down Cary Grant is slowly turned right-side-up as he approaches a supine Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious*, we know that this isn't the way it would look in reality; nor does it approximate even the feeling of this experience—it is far too delightful. Its appeal is to the inner eye. Our memory stamps it false but our fancy is pleased. If the movie camera—a term which has been used loosely here to indicate both the photography and the cutting—can be said in general to perform the function of two sets of eyes, director's and spectator's, and to transform the movie screen into that union of minds which is the goal of every artist, the difference between the Hitchcock camera and those of other directors is that it deliberately contrives to maintain the distinction; the difference between *Frenzy* and other Hitchcock pictures is that in this latest work the uncannily supple Hitchcock camera—at once ironic Virgil and wide-eyed Dante—reminds us of our taste for the pleasures of the inferno with more insistence, and with perhaps a darker and more severe humour, than ever before.

If *Frenzy* resists interpretation except in these terms (which are, to a large extent, the familiar ones of French and American *auteur* critics), it is because Hitchcock's films have nothing to do with our cognitive life. They have their source and inspiration in the imaginative life, and it is to the imagination that they return. Perhaps this is why Hitchcock is so appealing, and why so many people who like movies feel that an old Hitchcock film on TV is the only one worth staying in for, or a new Hitchcock film the only one worth going out for. But it is a risky business to try to account for this phenomenon, as risky as trying to explain why people like movies. One of cinema's many paradoxes is that to try fully to understand Hitchcock, seemingly the most maddeningly superficial of directors, is to fumble blindly after the roots of film itself. For at the heart of the mystery of Hitchcock is the mystery of film, which has yet to yield its deepest secrets. ■

CENSORSHIP AND THE PRESS

Guy Phelps

The current debate about film censorship in this country has brought to public attention the important part played by the local authorities, some of whom have interpreted their role to include the moral guardianship of their electors by asserting more extensively their statutory rights to allow or prevent the exhibition of films in their areas. This increased council activity has exposed a number of weaknesses in the structure of censorship, one of which is discussed in this article.

It is a function of our democratic procedures that elected councillors are often called on to make decisions concerning matters in which they have no special knowledge. What is disturbing, in relation to film censorship, is that the information upon which such decisions are based is extremely limited and partial. Quite simply, it is a fact that councillors, in their role as film censors, rely heavily on the press as their primary source of knowledge. Those committees that do insist on viewing films already certificated by the British Board of Film Censors (and in the present climate their number, although as yet very small, is growing) decide which films to vet largely on the basis of what has appeared in the press. Reviewers in the national papers come to play a significant part in the process by which the exhibition pattern of a film evolves; and if it is doubtful whether these writers would wish to exert this unintended power, it is certain that this function is not uppermost in their minds as they write. They are, after all, themselves entertainers, concerned to produce columns with their own intrinsic appeal. They would certainly not claim objectivity or detachment. It must be at least debatable whether the personal quirks of the critics are directly relevant to the complex problems of ascertaining the suitability of films for public exhibition.

The second point, and the one I want to elaborate here, is that general press coverage, outside the usual 'arts' columns, can create an atmosphere in which council (and even BBFC) decisions are likely to be affected. It is inevitable that the growth of instant reporting on radio and TV should force the press to abandon its emphasis on news. Nowadays the press either become commentators on and analysts of stories already in the public consciousness; or they transfer their attention to the sort of items which the electronic media have neither the time nor inclination to cover. This revision of policy has not been enough to avert a crisis in the industry, the chief symptoms of which are the falling circulations of almost all the 'popular' papers. But the spectacular success of Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* has suggested one way to halt this decline. That age-old approach whereby permissiveness, immorality, acts of deviance or aggression are exposed in minute, titillating detail remains much favoured.

Of course, in a time when there is no immediately identifiable moral consensus, these are subjects of concern. Many people are worried about what they consider to be a lowering of standards, and the media provide large and vulnerable targets. Television and film have become the objects of criticism which is really directed at developments in society as a whole. It is temptingly easy to identify 'obsenity' on the screen, to draw attention to it and possibly even eradicate it; rather harder to change society itself.

The use of the media themselves as a source of copy is noticeably increasing; and although this incestuous fascination is by no means confined to one medium, the press is the most obvious offender. When a media story, in addition, includes aspects of the obsession with permissiveness, it apparently becomes journalistically irresistible. The censorship debate not only falls into this category, but contains other highly desirable ingredients: personalities, a large selection of available commentators who can be relied on for immediate (and often extreme) reaction, anti-intellectualism in the form of the art/pornography controversy, the romanticism of the 'little man' (e.g., Ross McWhirter) versus the media giants, numerous, accessible and probably salacious pictures, etc.

Where films are concerned, it is natural that councils should take notice of these reports. If they themselves are unaware of them, there is no shortage of individuals or groups who will ensure that this ignorance is eradicated. The Festival of Light, in particular, has dedicated itself to exerting pressure on local authorities in an attempt to influence their policies (although it should be made clear that the vast majority continue to abide by the decisions of the BBFC). Study of local papers shows that a co-ordinated campaign has been instigated by the Festival, often based on lamentably inadequate evidence. Two examples may suggest the level of the debate.

One local Festival group petitioned their council member, trying to gain his support in their efforts to prevent the showing of a film in their area. The spokesman 'admitted that he did not know a great deal' about the picture, but said that he was 'getting fed up with that kind of film being foisted on the public.' In response to this pressure, the

councillor commented that he couldn't judge the film unseen, but added, 'I expect it's a bad film and dare say if I saw it I would come out against it.' This valuation was based on press reports he had read.*

During an issue of the BBC-TV programme *Midweek*, Ludovic Kennedy interviewed a council film-viewing committee. At one point the following exchange took place:

KENNEDY: Is Sevenoaks to see this film?
COUNCIL MEMBER: I sincerely hope not. It is poor quality and should be deposited in a vault along with other blue films.

KENNEDY: Have you seen it?
COUNCIL MEMBER: No.

In both cases, the film referred to was Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*; and these were just two examples of many. Clearly a large number of people, some of them in positions of authority, had been induced to make up their minds about a film they had never seen. How this came about represents a classic study of the press at work.

The film had certainly provoked comment abroad, dividing the critics. Pauline Kael's now celebrated *New Yorker* review argued that it 'altered the face of an art form.' The director Robert Altman referred to it as 'a standard for looking at films of the past and judging films of the future.' Others, less impressed, described it as pornography thinly disguised as art or, in Clive Barnes' words, as 'beautifully perfumed trash.' In Paris the film opened uncut in seven cinemas, arousing fierce debate. In Italy it was given a censorship visa after a few short cuts, but was then subject to a private prosecution, charged with 'obscene content offensive to public decency, characterised by an exasperating pansexualism for its own end, presented with obsessive self-indulgence catering to the lower instincts of the libido, dominated by the idea of stirring unchecked appetites for sexual pleasure, permeated by scurrilous language,' and a good deal more.

This sort of accusation quickly drew the attention of the British press. The first story appeared in the *Sunday Mirror* of December 17, 1972, and its presentation was typical of the treatment the film was to receive. A large headline ('Marlon Brando Shocker . . . He's the star of amazing new "blue" film'), a large photograph and rather smaller article completely filled the front page. The report consisted almost entirely of a synopsis of the plot, padded out with references to 'breaking every permissive barrier' and 'wallowing in detailed perversions.' The 'summary' of the story is instructive: 'Brando, hung up over wife's suicide, meets sex-hungry colonel's daughter. Their minds click. He seduces her in five minutes flat. Then follows a series of blistering sequences calculated to knock the bottom out of the back-street porno film market.' Apart from being hardly a fair representation of the film, this account betrays a touching ignorance of the content of real 'porno' films; but since the writer was not the paper's film critic there is no reason to expect knowledge of films of any sort. Later editions of the *News of the World* that day carried a hastily written version of the story, conveying a clear impression that

**Wimbledon News*, February 23, 1973

YOKEL HORROR IS THE LAST STRAW

B RUTAL, vicious, sadistic, repulsive. I disliked intensely STRAW DOGS (X).

X for Last Tango then London storm

OBSCENE! VATICAN HITS

From MADELON DIMONT in Rome
THE Vatican has attacked the British film "The Devils," as being the most obscene thing violence and blasphemy. The critic also attacks the Venice film festival organisers for showing the

I DON'T WANT MY DAUGHTER TO SEE THIS FILM

THE FILM SHOCKER TO END THEM ALL

The cinema will never be the same

and inherently obscene so long as there is someone whose artistry, used daringly but responsibly, can offer the spectator a transformed view of it.' Victor Davies of the *Daily Express* had also seen the film, and his account, like Walker's, represented at least an attempt to describe what it was about rather than simply what it showed.

An article in the *Daily Mail* of January 12, however, returned the debate to its former level. 'This film has gone too far,' announced Anthony Lejeune (not himself a film critic), before describing the 'gratuitous nastiness' in some detail. His conclusion that *Last Tango* is 'a deeply corrupting film' since 'it corrupts and coarsens the sensibilities of all of us, not because we are shocked by it but because we are not,' is ingenious if less than logical. Rational argument was not at any point a strong feature of the article.

By the end of January the story was clearly being groomed as the natural successor to two previous censorship sagas: the court case involving the ATV Warhol documentary, and the various decisions about the film version of *Oh! Calcutta!*. On January 30 Donald Zec's column in the *Daily Mirror* was devoted to 'the film the censor will have to decide on.' Readers were treated to yet another blow-by-blow account, after which Zec boldly came out neither for nor against the film. He hoped that 'neither the prudes nor the permissive pressure groups will throw [the censor] off his balance.'

Zec had opened his column with the remark: 'I would not care to be the British censor today as he grapples with the spoken and simulated obscenities brazenly on offer in one of the most astonishing pictures ever made.' This statement was apparently interpreted by the rest of the press to mean that the final censorship decision was being made that very day. As a result the offices of the BBFC were besieged with enquiries from all sectors of the media. Since the decision was in fact by no means imminent, and there was therefore nothing factual to report, the papers were forced to improvise, substituting conjecture and assumption. Next morning the *Mail* carried an article under the name of their entertainment correspondent which departed from the true situation at almost every point. Meetings and viewings that had never taken place were reported, and it was suggested that major cuts were being demanded by the Board, whose feeling was that the film would be 'unsuitable for English audiences.'

The *Sun* and *Mirror* took up the tale on February 6, both carrying front page features. The *Sun's* contribution was a revamped American interview with Maria Schneider, in which she was reported as claiming a wide variety of sexual experience. On this particular day, in fact, press involvement with the media as news reached an absurd level. The three main subjects in the tabloids were the court verdict in the Warhol case, the union 'blacking' of Independent Television in response to the banning by the IBA of the documentary on Poulson, and *Last Tango in Paris*. The entire *Mirror* front page was devoted to these stories, while the *Sun* could find only a small corner to announce that there was to be a surprise election in the Republic of Ireland.

nobody on the paper had actually heard of the film until that moment. This is scarcely surprising, since at the time there was no copy in this country.
Alexander Walker had seen the picture,

and wrote a defence of it in the *Evening Standard* of January 1 under the headline 'This film must be shown'. His opinion was that this 'important film' confirmed the 'error of labelling anything as intrinsically

By this time the story was becoming more than a little stale; a new angle had to be found. Both the *Mail* and the *Mirror* turned to the same device, despatching people to Paris to see the film. The *Mail* flew over five of its female staff and their opinions were spread across the centre pages of the February 8 issue. Apparently even journalists believe what they read in the papers, for expectations of a pornographic orgy were evidently high. Inevitably, they found that the film did not live up to its publicity: 'Those who go to it hoping for illicit thrills will... be disappointed'; 'obscene, slimy, pornographic—it's none of these things'; 'contrary to the lurid publicity it has received (*sic*)... *Last Tango* is not, in fact, one long sustained sexual grapple.' Four of the five agreed that the film should not be cut. The fifth, while highly antipathetic towards it, expressed herself as opposed in any case to censorship.

The *Mirror* of February 16 told a similar story. A double page spread featured the views of seven 'representative' readers. They also had been flown to Paris to see 'the most controversial picture of the year,' but despite the *Mirror's* excited claims the seven readers remained notably unimpressed. Four shared the opinion that the film should be shown uncut, two called for small cuts, and only one thought it more suited to club presentation. Once again anticipations had not been realised: 'I expected to be much more shocked than I was'; 'I expected to be shocked... I wasn't'; 'I expected to see a lot more in the love scenes.' Almost all denied that they had been either shocked or offended.

Unabashed, the newspaper coverage continued in much the same form as before, reaching a new peak in the week when the censor's decision was finally made. Speculation about this decision was rife and often wild. The general impression conveyed throughout was of a Board of Censors desperately seeking a solution to an unusually difficult problem. In fact, the censors have faced many cases more intractable than *Last Tango in Paris*.

Stephen Murphy, Secretary of the Board, had originally seen the picture at a private viewing in late December 1972. It is fairly common in such circumstances for Murphy to advise the distributors that it would be pointless for them to submit the film in its complete form, and to suggest that they send in a revised version for official censorship. But he was satisfied that *Last Tango* could be submitted as it stood, and it was therefore seen by the Board, in the presence of its President, Lord Harlech, a week later. Only two scenes presented any serious problem. One was essentially a case of very strong language married to a visual in which 'perversion' was implied but not shown. Since this scene represented the very heart of the picture, and could not be excised without severely damaging its meaning, it was eventually decided to allow it. The other difficulty was the now celebrated sodomy scene. Here, exception was taken to a shot in which Brando takes butter in his hand and uses it to lubricate his partner. The Board considered that this could not be passed. Unfortunately, for continuity reasons, this cut could not be made without also removing the shot that followed. A

total of thirty feet of film, representing about twenty seconds, was involved, and this suggested cut was accepted by the distributors.

Alberto Grimaldi and Bernardo Bertolucci, the producer and director, were less happy. En route for New York, where *Last Tango* was to open on February 1, they called at Soho Square and pleaded with the Board for the reinstatement of the cut material. They stressed that their concern was artistic rather than commercial, making the incontestable point that the film was already a guaranteed financial success. Murphy remained adamant, arguing that the pressures at that time were such that he could not relent. That very week, the injunction against the Warhol documentary had been granted, the GLC's verdict on *Oh! Calcutta!* was anticipated, and *A Clockwork Orange* was just opening in the provinces. Murphy wanted a few days to weigh up developments, but after a week his stand was even firmer. *Oh! Calcutta!* had been banned, and Hastings had been the first authority to reject *A Clockwork Orange*.

United Artists were once more prepared to accept the decision, but Grimaldi and Bertolucci refused to accept any cuts and insisted on a further meeting. This took place on February 12, when the pair returned from America where their film had opened to tremendous acclaim. This time both parties proved more amenable. The success of the picture in America and France (where it had been seen by over half a million people in the first two months), together with the collapse of the prosecution in Italy, suggested that the British censors were being unduly tough. Since Murphy basically agreed with the film-makers that the required cuts did seriously damage the dialogue, he was inclined to soften his attitude. After lengthy bargaining, a compromise was reached whereby the cut was reduced to ten seconds. The second, unobjectionable, shot was reinstated, together with a brief section of the butter sequence.

This decision was not announced until February 16, a fact which the press interpreted as a sign of further indecision and prevarication. In fact, the delay was at the request of the distributors.

The Board's announcement of the granting of an X certificate inevitably produced a further rash of press stories; and the predictable reactions from the 'anti-permissive' lobbies. Mrs. Whitehouse called for the resignation of Murphy and his whole Board. Raymond Blackburn threatened, and later initiated, legal proceedings, and the Festival of Light unveiled its plans to put pressure on the local authorities. These people had not yet seen the film. Nor had the local censorship bodies. But the saturation press coverage had created the climate in which *Last Tango* was to be judged. To many people it must have almost seemed that they had seen it, so familiar were they by now with its plot and subject matter. At the very least they were aware that it represented a 'problem', a definition that inevitably coloured all reactions. Certainly many local councillors decided that it could not be shown without their prior approval. The chairman of Manchester's viewing committee noted that 'there has been a lot

of controversy and when this happens we make a point of seeing' the film in question. The chairman of Southend's Public Protection Committee declared that in view of 'all the press comment' he and his colleagues would have to see the film rather than rely on the BBFC's judgment. Five other authorities immediately made similar announcements, and their lead was later followed by others, many of whom had not previously vetted certificated films.

One result of all this is that the film may be refused exhibition in a number of places, as happened to *A Clockwork Orange* in like circumstances. A more important long-term consequence is that as each new 'controversial' picture leads to an increase in the number of councils questioning BBFC decisions, a further undermining of the state of censorship is threatened; for the whole system collapses unless there exists a broad, general agreement between the Board and the statutory bodies. While many would argue that the structure as it stands is indeed anachronistic and in need of review, a debate founded on hysteria and ignorance is hardly conducive to the establishing of a more satisfactory system.

Two final points should perhaps be made. First, it should be noted that only a very small percentage of films that touch on matters of sex and violence become the subject of controversy. Much greater sexual explicitness, in particular, can of course be found in many films that have never received press publicity. As George Melly observed in relation to *Last Tango*: 'If you hope to be turned on, you'll probably get your money's worth better at *I Am Available* or *The Wife Swappers*.'

In addition, there is the strange fact that the pictures which have caused the greatest controversy in Britain have, in general, been accepted elsewhere without comparable fuss. *Straw Dogs*, for example, was rated as suitable for children in America; while even Sweden, with its traditionally tough approach to screen violence, passed the film as fit to be seen by 15-year-olds. The South African censor's hard-line attitude called, on this occasion, for only minor cuts. Ken Russell's *The Devils* caused a furore here, but has in fact been banned only in Greece, Spain and Portugal, countries hardly renowned for their protection of the right to freedom of expression. *A Clockwork Orange* has been banned only in Brazil. As we have seen, *Last Tango* has been shown uncut in France and America; and the Australian and Israeli censors, among others, have also passed the film complete for exhibition to adult audiences. In these circumstances, the certificating of the film in this country seems a considerable way from 'collective madness', as the Board's decision was described by Mrs. Whitehouse.

The argument about censorship in a 'free' society is an important one; it cannot be furthered by the sort of inadequate and inflammatory treatment it too often receives. The *Last Tango* case indicates how a film that many people would regard as responsible and sincere has been used by the press for purely exploitative and sensationalist purposes. While there may be strong grounds for defending the film itself against such charges, it is less easy to exonerate the press.

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CANNES



Above: Françoise Lebrun in 'La Maman et la Putain'; Jacqueline Bisset, Jean-Pierre Léaud in 'La Nuit Américaine'

One of the more bizarre press communications at Cannes this year came from somewhere called the Centre de Thalassothérapie, advertising sea-water cures for festival stress. Among stress-making factors, they noted the projection during the Festival of 1,600 kilometres of movie, a noise level of 80 decibels outside the Palais at two in the morning, enough policemen (actually stacked behind the cinema, in buses) to provide one CRS man for every eight

metres of the Palais frontage, and a daily parade through the Carlton foyer of 2,000 people and 45 dogs. Under stress, a new film found itself advertised as directed by Curtis Cinema (better known as Harrington). Lindsay Cinema complained of the Festival's growing vulgarity, just after shoving a publicity-minded starlet away from the photographers. Ingmar Cinema descended for a superbly soothing press conference, a *deus ex Eden Roc*, infinitely benign. And

for the second year running, the Jury chose to divide the Grand Prix: between Alan Bridges' **The Hireling**, which we should soon be seeing here, and Jerry Schatzberg's **Scarecrow**, a kind of *Of Mice and Men* for the 1970s, with Gene Hackman and Al Pacino playing two tramps who make their cross-country journey as though looking for an Oscar at the end of the trail.

Cannes was itself; and yet a rather perplexing festival. A film like *La Maman et la Putain* would hardly have made the Palais screen a few years ago; but a festival which looked more wide-awake in some areas also distinguished itself by rejecting anything Oriental (the proffered entries from Japan, and the new Ray picture) while finding space for some tepid European also-rans. The Critics' Week continues to languish. Films in the Directors' Fortnight offered a less spirited alternative than usual to activities in the main hall. One has the impression of a festival alive but hesitant, still perhaps looking around for the big new talent.

For some people, Jean Eustache's **La Maman et la Putain** provided it—as well as evidence that the old New Wave still has more than a ripple left. Eustache, whose earlier feature *Father Christmas Has Blue Eyes* dates from the mid-Sixties, belongs to the generation which was shaking up French cinema a decade ago, and his film recalls the old days in its exceptionally high incidence of references to movie titles. The influences visible—Rivette, Rohmer, Bresson—are exemplary. Here, at 220 minutes running time, really is the 'intimate epic' that big studios like to advertise, staking a claim to the title by sheer length, undeniably intimate, and offering hardly an action more resolute than the switching on of a record-player (the musical resonances are as significant as the movie ones). The film flows on a current of dialogue, or monologue—interior, confessional, sometimes talk for talk's sake.

Eustache needs his running time: the indulgence of time is an indulgence of mood, character taken on its own terms, not sharpened but stretched. The young man (Jean-Pierre Léaud, some small distance from Antoine Doinel) has no job, no tying responsibilities; he is supported patiently by the woman he lives with (Bernadette Lafont), and at the beginning of the film is about to be discarded by his Bressonian girl friend (Isabelle Weingarten, from *Four Nights of a Dreamer*). By a mixture of hazard and fate, of a kind guaranteed to appeal to such a character, he acquires a third woman: a nurse (Françoise Lebrun) much given to discussing her own promiscuity. Once the situation is wound up—and, for my money, the ninety minutes or so of winding make the film's best part—the three characters are set loose to rend themselves and each other. Mounting impatience is in a sense a tribute to the film: the self-obsessed secondariness of the trio, their catch-phrases (like the nurse's habit of getting 'maximum' into every other sentence) have a compulsive authenticity, like the kind of conversation one might shy away from in real life. Eustache's combination of stylisation with confessional accuracy (too accurate for some of the audience, who clucked in competition with the occasionally scabrous dialogue) justifies its considerable pretensions. It is

also, thank heaven, sometimes very funny.

It was agreeable to see Claude Goretta, another film-maker who has been around for some time, and whose start came back in Free Cinema days with the Piccadilly Circus of *Nice Time*, arriving in style with **The Invitation**. Here the name one heard mentioned was Renoir—unfairly, since Goretta's modest and distinctively Swiss-milk undertaking fades under the comparison. It concerns an office-worker who has capitalised on an inheritance by acquiring a rather grand country property, and who out of the goodness of his simple, middle-aged heart invites his colleagues for an afternoon treat. The outing is predictably catastrophic: tempers flare, office manners evaporate, as the party disintegrates under the sardonic and splendid eye of the hired waiter (François Simon), a catalyst with a cocktail-shaker. *The Invitation* keeps within the limits of a single dramatic notion and strays when it tries to go outside them, as in the introduction of an unnecessary outsider in the form of a thief who makes off with someone's coat. But its observation is consistently involved and engaging.

Jean-Luc Bideau, the office prankster in Goretta's film, reappears as one of André Delvaux's stress-haunted family men in **Belle**. Good actor though he is, Bideau seems both too young and too open for his role here, as a man of letters morosely facing the onset of middle age and his daughter's unwelcome marriage, and turning aside into an obsessive and mysterious series of encounters with Belle, an enigmatic girl who has taken up residence in a derelict farmhouse on the marshes. The Fagnes district is a terrain for violent legends, and the film develops Delvaux's special sense of the borderland of obsession, from the moment when the writer's car jolts to a halt and he finds blood on the road to the final double twist of an ending which offers and then withdraws rational explanations. *Belle* seems to have the makings of a film as finely honed as *Rendez-vous à Bray*; that Delvaux, a notably sympathetic director, doesn't

quite pull it off this time seems partly due to some mannered obfuscation out on the marshes and partly to Bideau's too solid presence. It's hard to believe that he wouldn't simply get back into his car and drive on.

Chabrol's **Les Noces Rouges**, seen out of festival, offers some unexpected parallels: a not dissimilar family (mother, daughter and stepfather), a lot of driving, and a killing followed by a compulsive confession. Made with more than Hitchcockian assurance and a wicked humour, *Les Noces Rouges* is of the calibre of *Juste Avant la Nuit*, perhaps a fraction short of *Le Boucher*—in other words, the kind of movie that only Chabrol seems able to produce with metronomic regularity. The setting, continuing his murder tour of the quieter French provinces, is the chateau town of Valençay; the plot concerns an affair between the mayor's wife (Stéphane Audran, giving a performance of best-tempered steel) and his deputy (Michel Piccoli), culminating in one callously efficient and one batteringly brutal killing. Chabrol, of course, extends a murder plot worthy of Patricia Highsmith to take in a range of provincial attitudes; and if this is to be the last of this series of films, as he has said it may be, it goes out on a line of dialogue which it would be a pity to give away, but which stunningly confirms the principle that the place creates the event.

Chabrol is able to sum up a whole secret life of vulgarity in the way a man eats his soup, and the uncompromising selfishness of his characters is set against a background of country town decorum and fastidious public manner. Carlos Saura, in the disappointing **Ana y los Lobos**, introduces Geraldine Chaplin, in the catalyst role of brisk nursery governess, into a household in which three variously dotty brothers stand for the Spanish notions of militarism, religious mania and sexual fantasy. Geraldine Chaplin copes resolutely with assorted lunacies, and the solid, four-square house in the middle of nowhere is a beautifully chosen setting. But the Spanish allegory is

too explicit, ultimately too splashy. It could do with some Chabrolian detail.

If any theme seemed to emerge at Cannes this year it was, somewhat surprisingly, that of historical reconstruction. Jean-Marie Straub's explicit title, **A History Lesson**, could have stood for several other films; though Straub's manner remains perplexingly his own. His new film is divided between near-monologues, in which some of the facts about the economic aspects of Julius Caesar's rise to power are rapidly related, and sequences in which the young man who asks the questions drives through the choking traffic of Rome. The total effect might be described as rivetingly boring—and it is riveting, as well as uniquely tedious, to watch three sequences, each running about eight minutes, in which a man is simply driving, very slowly, down narrow streets. But if Straub's purpose is to suggest the continuity (or discontinuity?) of Roman life, then the technique seems perversely uneconomical for the exponent of minimal cinema. And similarly the method of presentation, at any rate in a subtitled version, makes it exceptionally difficult to take in the facts of the history lesson. The spoken words, in their scrupulously flat but curiously distracting context, slide off the surface of the mind. Significantly, the film quickens formidably in a short question and answer session with one of Caesar's soldiers in an airy mountain setting. Here, something has slipped under the guard of the monotone.

Straub, however idiosyncratic, is a filmmaker. Another style in reconstruction was demonstrated by the Hungarian **Petőfi '73**, directed by Ferenc Kardós but looking as though a film school had turned its junior pupils loose to play with Jancsó's *Confrontation*. The idea, that students should reenact, in their present-day classrooms and university buildings, some of the story of Petőfi, Hungarian poet of the 1848 revolution, turns out to be of the kind that collapses under its own good intentions. Unruly crowds running up and down, pausing occasionally to declaim or wave a banner, can convey only the most superficial sense of historical purpose: this is play-school reconstruction, Jancsó for the under-tens.

That Jancsó's method can be usefully influential was demonstrated by the Greek **Days of 36**, directed by Theo Angelopoulos, whose *The Reconstruction* was shown in the 1971 London Festival. Angelopoulos acknowledges the influence in one shot—horsemen riding out to round up fugitives—whose effect is of a graceful bow to the master. But his film stands squarely on its own feet, as a precise and compelling account of an episode preceding the establishment of the Metaxas dictatorship in 1936. A prisoner seizes as hostage a politician who comes to visit him, and presents his jailers with a problem both insoluble and mounting absurd. Military officials, doughy in their British-style uniforms, devise laboriously ineffectual stratagems to release the hostage; the prisoner asks for music, and a gramophone is solemnly set up in the courtyard; doors are flung open, creating empty perspectives of corridors. The sense is of a suspension of time and reason, finally ended by a gunshot.

Marco Leto's **La Villeggiatura** is also

'Days of 36'

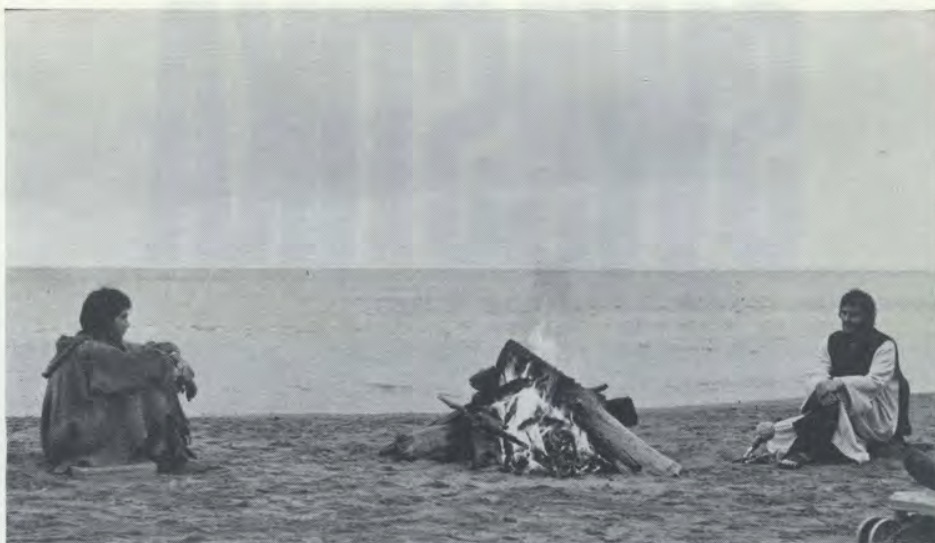


concerned with aspects of pre-war politics. The scene is an island detention centre for Italian political dissidents, and the film develops the relationship between a new arrival, a donnishly rational thinker, and the ingratiating governor (Adolfo Celi), whose technique is all velvet gloves and civilised compromises. Slowly, subtly, against a background of grey skies and chilly beaches, *La Villeggiatura* brings its leading character to the point where a line must finally be drawn against the temptation of fascism in a white shirt. The setting imposes itself through a kind of mannerly didacticism in the film's very unified style: academic calm contrasts with the rougher conditions of the actual prisoners; the leading character's feeling that he has somehow slipped out of time is a significant but unstressed factor.

La Villeggiatura is so restrained, perhaps in a sense so local, that it seems to stand little chance of wider distribution. Rather the same is true of Gianni Amelio's *La Città del Sole*, which is a kind of meditation on the ideas of the 17th-century thinker Tommaso Campanella. A monk wanders through war-ravaged landscapes, shots that might almost have strayed from *Andrei Rublev*; he talks quietly on a dark seashore to a young boy. Seen without subtitles, the film's philosophy had to be left to emerge largely through its calm, undeflected, often striking images. But this thoughtful and reasoned school of Italian film-making is decidedly sympathetic, notably in the way it respects ideas without trying to sell them. The mystery (though RAI backed *Città del Sole*) is how the film-makers manage to sell their own exceptionally uncommercial projects to a rapacious industry.

Still more history in Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, about a doomed Conquistador expedition in search of El Dorado, in which the soldiers in their incongruous Spanish panoply are finally completely unstrung by privation and the unknown wilderness. The film opens and closes with two magical, imposing and technically superlative images—the troop emerging from the mists on a mountainside, and a last circling shot of their drifting raft, awash with corpses and infested by monkeys. In between, in the film's present version, altogether too much is hamstrung by near-disastrous English dubbing—and perhaps, to some extent, by Herzog's failure to strike a balance between naturalistic and highly stylised performance. Those two shots, however, and a strange little Indian flute melody, stick in the mind.

Finally, *Visions of Eight*, the Munich Olympics film, in which the premise of the David Wolper production was that, as everyone would have seen everything on TV, eight (or, as at first announced, ten) film-makers would record what struck their fancy. The answer, disappointingly, would seem to be that fancies were not greatly stirred; and that the film-makers were given too much of an independent hand to realise how monotonous all that slow-motion would look strung end to end. Arthur Penn's pole-vaulting is lyrical (but no more than Leni's); Milos Forman's decathlon a show-off display, vulgarised by a determination to find Forman characters beneath every official hat; John Schlesinger's marathon, intercut with the Israeli massacre, a brave try. Mai



'La Città del Sole'

Zetterling's filming of the weight-lifters, including one marvellous competitor solemnly frog-jumping up a flight of steps, takes what honours there are. But it's interesting to realise how much sports filming depends on competitive tension, perhaps a measure of identification. With all that missing, one has an impression of film-makers who have perhaps under-trained for the occasion, staging their own little exhibition races.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

La Nuit Américaine has a fine metaphorical ring to it, but of course it literally means 'Day for Night'—shooting a night scene in the daytime. Presumably the process was invented in America, and this is in a sense Truffaut's most American film. Dedicated to Dorothy and Lillian Gish, it is a film about film-making—something often done in Hollywood but never in France, where it is supposed to bring bad luck.

The film within the film is sort of American too. 'Meet Pamela' is its title, and its plot is not unlike that of *Bonjour Tristesse* (the homage here would be to Preminger, not Françoise Sagan); its cast is headed by Jacqueline Bisset, Jean-Pierre Aumont (the 'Continental Lover'), Valentina Cortese and Jean-Pierre Léaud. But the 'real' story is of the filming, with Truffaut playing the anxious director, and the off-stage dramas involving Léaud and an apprentice script-girl, the death of Aumont, and Cortese's inability to say her lines. This last is partially explained by the illness of her son, but also by some bad habits she has picked up in Italy. 'With Federico, all I do is recite numbers—thirty-eight, forty-seven, sixty-two—with the proper dramatic emphasis, and we do it all later.' 'No, Severine,' Truffaut replies, 'in France we have to say the actual words.'

This is Truffaut at his freshest and funniest, but not of course at his most moving—and there were those who preferred *Les Deux Anglaises*, with its *mal-adresses*, to the slick perfection of *La Nuit Américaine*. I felt a bit that way when the film was shown, but in the desert of the second week at Cannes I changed my mind. Why choose, after all? Truffaut had a good

time making this film, and we had a good time watching it. Is that bad?

Truffaut himself decided to stay out of competition, giving the reason that he didn't think a film about filming should be stacked up against 'real' films. Gossip had it that there was another reason: he didn't want to spoil Léaud's chances for the Best Actor Prize for his role in the Eustache film. As it turned out, the Eustache film—for my money, the best in the competition—got a Special Jury Prize, and Truffaut might well have walked off with the Grand Prix.

Out-of-competition films were quite the rage this year: Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* and Losey's *A Doll's House*. But *A Doll's House* was out of competition in another way, too. It was very much an interim film, something for Losey to do while waiting to start the Proust film. So was *Trotsky*, but to a lesser degree. With the Ibsen, one felt that Losey was attacking subject matter that interested him, but that didn't involve him totally. Is it for that reason that this is probably his most beautiful, his most *soigné* film? Because he wasn't so involved in the theme, he had the time and energy to make it look really good.

And it did: Losey anchors the play firmly in Norwegian 19th-century reality, creating Breughel-like snowscapes and using the town of Røros for all it was worth. Some thought the casting of Jane Fonda was a mistake—a 'false good idea', as the French say. And it is true that she is very 20th-century, never more so than in the final scene. But she does have that glow which separates the actress from the star; and she is also an actress, holding her own against Trevor Howard's consummate Dr. Rank.

Jean-Marie Straub's *History Lesson* was also an 'interim film', something he made while waiting for his Proust, the Schönberg *Moses and Aaron* opera which he starts next year. Put this down to Straubolatry if you like, but it seems to me that his counterpointing of the Brecht version of the irresistible rise of Julius Caesar with the Rome of today, the Rome that survived Caesar, was not only legitimate but very moving. It's a small-scale work, if you like, and one in which the movement of leaves is as important as that of armies.

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SWASTIKA

David Wilson



Nazi Christmas in 'Swastika'

Gentlemen, in a hundred years time they will be showing a fine colour film describing the terrible days we are living through. Don't you want to play a part in that film? . . . Hold out now, so that a hundred years hence the audience does not hoot and whistle when you appear on the screen.

—Joseph Goebbels

Hitler is big news this year, and big box-office. Quick to exploit a trend of their own making, the media are falling over each other to get in on the act. The revival of the great dictator (and Chaplin's film has been playing to packed houses in Germany itself) may be something for sociologists and psychologists to explain, but meanwhile what the Germans have already dubbed 'the Hitler wave' has reached tidal proportions.

Only recently the *Observer* reported a Liverpool *Daily Post* revelation that according to his sister-in-law the Führer once lived in a Liverpool bed-sit, and while in residence 'killed his niece in a fit of incestuous passion, mooched round the docks and once visited London.' On the day this story appeared you could have tuned in to a television revival of *The Diary of Anne Frank*; a week earlier, the BBC observed Good Friday with a repeat of an exhaustive restaging of the Auschwitz doctor libel trial; and a few days before that, a BBC 'current'

affairs programme devoted itself to the Warsaw ghetto uprising, following hard on Martin Gray's best-selling memoirs of the ghetto and Treblinka extermination camp. This same programme had already assembled a special edition on the final solution to the ubiquitous Martin Bormann mystery, laid to rest at last by the Germans themselves after being embarrassingly resurrected by the *Daily Express*.

The cinema has not been slow to respond to this increased production in the Nazi mythology industry. With memory still fresh of the lengthy television play on the same theme, MGM's *Hitler: the Last Ten Days* opened in London a few weeks after its world premiere in Berlin, tactfully arranged to coincide with what would have been the leading character's 84th birthday. There are at least two more Third Reich epics to come. Goebbels himself could scarcely have arranged a better public relations exposure for his client. And as someone with a thorough comprehension of the power of the media, he might have appreciated the reasons for the current fascination with what he himself did so much to record for posterity. The Hitler boom may be something to do with an unconscious ritual exorcism, the need to exhume a corpse if only to demonstrate that it is really dead—the 'cathartic crescendo',

as *Newsweek* called it. Or again it may derive from a morbid obsession with a horror story which was real and recent—recent enough at least for a generation who heard it from their parents to indulge a kind of vicarious nostalgia, a process which a psychiatrist might explain as compensation fantasy.

Such questions are prompted not only by the commercial cinema's exploitation of the Hitler wave, but also—and perhaps more substantially—by two documentary films intended to be a salutary counter to the nostalgia motive. *Swastika* (VPS), directed by Philippe Mora, has already garnered publicity, mainly because its centrepiece is a fascinating selection from the home movies apparently taken by Eva Braun. Its companion piece is *The Double-headed Eagle* (VPS), an account of the rise of Nazism amid the ruins of Weimar, meticulously assembled by Lutz Becker, who collaborated on the script of *Swastika*.

Swastika begins ominously, with a piece of animated kitsch. From a starry firmament a pirouetting planet gradually reveals itself as a red swastika which fills the screen, to the accompaniment of a rising crescendo of *Sieg Heil!*, before taking off again to settle finally over Berlin. There follows a visual symphony to the utopian Reich. Dawn, and the city stirring (the rhythmic montage of Ruttmann's *Berlin*); uniformed BDM girls singing by a lake; urban harmony and pastoral idyll—*Stadt und Land*—*Hand in Hand*, as the title of one of the films of the period puts it. Furtwängler conducts the 'Ode to Joy', and everywhere lurks the swastika, twisted symbol of strength through joy. Then into colour, and a bumptious Hitler entertaining Ribbentrop at the Berghof, his mountain retreat at Obersalzberg. The editing hereabouts is masterly, and after the manipulated black-and-white theatricals of the public face, the sudden switch to this amateur, privileged colour view of the semi-private man is a brilliant shock tactic.

With this opposition established, Philippe Mora switches adroitly between public expectation and private banality. Goebbels and Goering as Santa Claus, beaming as they distribute presents to model Aryan children; a huge Christmas tree topped by a swastika where once there was a five-pointed star; the 'Bismarck' launched, the Olympics, soldiers on parade, an American correspondent telling us of 'a new vigour and vitality' in this 'best centralised government in the world today.' And cut into this official record is the spontaneous banality of the Berghof home movies. Eva Braun swims, sunbathes, practises callisthenics, plays with a rabbit; Hitler goes for a country walk, mocks Goering's obesity with a little jig, calls his house guests in for tea, tells his secretaries that he'll arrange a repeat performance of *Gone With the Wind* since they obviously preferred it to last week's home-produced offering. Then gradually, at first almost surreptitiously, the warning shadows lengthen. The cosy domesticity of Eva Braun's candid camera is edged out by the mass rallies, the familiar archive footage given startling new life in colour.

It's about this point that the film's confidence in its purely visual impact seems to waver. We have already heard Helen

Morgan singing 'What Wouldn't I Do for That Man' over shots of Hitler being mobbed by women; now we are given, as an overly graphic harbinger of things to come, those amazing shots of the 'Hindenburg' bursting into flame, complete with hysterical eye-witness commentary. Increasingly, Wagner embellishes the soundtrack as the film launches us on a crash course through the Nazi holocaust. Special pleading here undermines the evidence, distorts its nature; anti-Semitism, for instance, is marked by the notorious ritual slaughter sequence from *Der ewige Jude* (described in the print I saw as a 'typical Nazi propaganda film,' though this overstatement has now apparently been taken out). It's disappointing to find a film which has made its point entirely without commentary (as distinct from implicit comment) now resorting to such devices as the hectoring symbolism of a storm brewing over Obersalzberg as a prelude to that familiar aerial panorama of a devastated German city (*Sieg Heil!* now echoing diminuendo in the distance). When sound is dubbed on to those grim shots of concentration camp bodies bulldozed into mass graves, one remembers how much more powerful was Resnais' *silent* comment on this unspeakable obscenity in *Night and Fog*. And it can only have been a grotesque error of judgment to have Noël Coward crooning 'Don't Let's be Beastly to the Germans' over the final shot of the ruins of Berlin, capped by a reverse of the opening as the animated swastika spins back into space.

The point of *Swastika*—and until the last thirty minutes or so it's well taken—is to offer a view of the Nazi phenomenon from a perspective of normality. The Third Reich can be glibly comprehended from the received opinion of compilations like Leiser's *Mein Kampf* or Romm's *Echo of the Jackboot*. Here the combination of stage-managed Nazi film and edited newsreel, with its carefully deployed material and its distorted soundtracks, creates an image of Hitler, as Philippe Mora says, as 'not human, but some alien psychopath, an historical fluke, a caricature of evil.' *Swastika* dismantles this view of Hitler as mythical monster with a less familiar slant on the banality of evil. The process involves using a good deal of new material from Nazi documentaries, uncut rushes and so on, film which avoids the staccato cutting of newsreel; colour grading of film shot in black and white; adding soundtrack to silent film (where possible, by lip-reading from the original), and re-recording distorted sound. The effect, at least the intended effect, is to demythologise an era rendered comprehensible by history; and to lend new currency to visual images which have increasingly evoked only a practised conditioned reflex.

Lutz Becker has used some of the same devices for his compilation on the rise of Hitler. *The Double-headed Eagle* is chronological in structure—from the early Nazi parades, with Hitler glimpsed on the sidelines, to the death struggle between the Nazis and the disunited Left and the final, ostensibly democratic ascendance of Hitler. Here again there is colour material, soundtrack on originally silent film, and an extensive use of feature film (*The Blue Angel*, musical extravaganzas, *Hitlerjunge Quex*, as well as documentary extracts). The result is



Top: Nazi awareness of the power of the media (from 'The Double-headed Eagle').

Below: 'Swastika': Hitler mobbed by women and Hitler with a human face.

a persuasive evocation of the spirit of the times, as much from a sociological aspect as from the perspective of historical reconstruction. In the margin, it's impossible not to notice the Nazis' developing awareness of the propaganda potential of film: cameras roll at the early party rallies, and these visual records are seen to be increasingly polished rehearsals for *Triumph of the Will*, the Riefenstahl methods tried and tested—no wonder her own film is such a finished performance.

As traditional historical analysis, Lutz Becker's film doesn't aspire to be more than very generalised. There is no reference, for instance, to Rosa Luxemburg and the Munich Soviet, the abortive 1923 putsch, or the financial crash. Such historical detail is enveloped in documentary and feature film footage of street battles, social inequalities, ideological strife as represented by the scene from *Hitlerjunge Quex* where the Hitler Youth's father bullies him into singing the 'Internationale'. The purpose here, as partly in *Swastika*, is to assemble an anthropological study of the German *petit bourgeois* who found himself caught up in the Nazi phenomenon.

Both these films oppose the resonance of familiar film imagery with an attempt to evoke an unfamiliar and thereby salutary reaction. How far they succeed will largely depend on this reaction. But in passing it's worth mentioning the potential hazards of an approach which Philippe Mora describes as 'almost a sheerly technical matter of juxtaposing the material to maximum dramatic effect.' Hitler with a human face is a new addition to Nazi iconography; but does the fact of seeing Hitler brush a fly from his face really tell us more than that self-evidently Hitler the mythical monster was also a man who brushed his teeth in the morning, complained of indigestion, practised little gestural mannerisms? And more importantly, does the awareness of this humanity really help to revise our opinion of the causes and consequences of the German surrender to Hitler—and to apply that understanding to present and future manipulations of mass power? The Führer in colour, says Philippe Mora, 'suddenly becomes much closer to us... No longer a phantom monster on scratched film, but an actuality. We are psychologically more vulnerable to a colour image, particularly to something we have never seen in colour before.' The Kuleshov experiment is enough to tell us that the way we are psychologically vulnerable to *any* image is not so black and white.

It may be, in fact, that films like *Swastika*, and even more films like *Hitler: the Last Ten Days*—with its simplistic juxtapositions of newsreel horrors with Alec Guinness as Hitler—are eventually counter-productive. For in the final analysis they may simply add to the myth, their private detail merely serving to respond to a new generation's need to cloak historical monsters in recognisable garb. Laughing at Hitler may be cathartic, but is Hitler simply funny? To watch Hitler's glazed expression as he inspects a parade of Nazi banners is to recognise an objectively ludicrous act. But the resonance of film, anywhere and at any time, is the mirror image in the eye of the beholder.

IN THE PICTURE



Video

Two years after the euphoria and the publicity barrage, the sober re-evaluation and the discreet pullback, the videocassette is surfacing again, this time as super-sophisticated laser holography. Last December, MCA, Inc. (Universal Pictures, Universal TV, Decca Records are all subsidiaries of MCA) launched Disco-Vision. If they don't hold all the aces, this medium-sized conglomerate at least seems to have thought the electronic poker game through to some sort of realistic conclusions. Radio Corporation of America (RCA) is the giant still hanging in there and promising a home videotape player-recorder for Christmas.

Disco-Vision uses 12-inch discs stamped with superfine tracks (12,500 tracks to the radial inch) which are scanned by a laser beam with a 9,000-hour life. Priced at around \$500, disc changer-playback units hook into a TV set, and up to 40 minutes of uninterrupted colour or black and white programming can be contained on each side of the disc.

MCA president Lew Wasserman seemed to have all the answers at the unveiling except *when*. Yet MCA's thinking seems to have gone further than that of RCA or Columbia Broadcasting (CBS), who dropped out of the 'hardware' race last year. MCA has quite simply decided that there will be no vast and complicated marketing, meaning that the discs will be sold outright. How the talent unions will react is another question. Two days after the unveiling, the Musicians Guild demanded Disco-Vision payments in its new contract for any of its members playing in any film sold for home use; and videocassette residuals figured this spring in the Writers Guild of America strike against both big-screen producers and television networks. MCA would make home viewing democratic, albeit for

non-altruistic reasons of marketing. There are no residual payments if you read your favourite book or play your favourite record ten times, but films 'belong' to someone and their screening is forbidden without prior consent and payment.

What defeated cassettes in 1970-71 was not only copyright but lack of standardisation. As they launched their hardware, Sony or RCA cassettes couldn't be played on a CBS playback machine. RCA's Selecta-Vision records via holograms, CBS's Electronic Video Recording uses really only miniaturised film in a cassette spool. The most sophisticated system (and the forerunner of Disco-Vision) has been recording on plastic discs, the results of research by AEG-Telefunken in Germany and Decca

in the U.S. The initial name was Teldec (all trade names in this field seem to be inelegant). MCA holds six of the key patents.

Beyond the war of systems, the 1970 videocassette enthusiasts also failed to resolve the problem of what they would put on the audio-visual cartridges or discs. Here MCA also seems to have made its decision. Its software will simply be the entire Universal backlog of movies. 'They will be our first offering,' says John Findlater, the MCA vice-president in charge of Disco-Vision. 'It's important to keep prices down. By that I mean discs which will retail from \$1.99 to \$9.95 at the most.'

Meanwhile, cassette promoters are sounding the industrial market—ships, apartment blocks, hotels. After pilot projects in New York and Toronto, trade names such as Pik-a-Movie (Fox, Zeiss-Ikon), Hotelevision (Columbia Pictures, Rediffusion, Rank), Computer Television (Time Inc., EMI) and Metrovision (MGM, Sony) are popping up in chain hotels in North America and Europe.

Usually, the systems forgo expensive hardware research and are economically realistic. In Metrovision, for instance, which is a four-channel Sony videotape unit transmitted to room TV sets, the hotel buys the videotape unit, Metro supplies the cassettes and receives payment on a per capita, occupancy of room basis. The programming usually includes one 'current' film (a picture that has completed its first run in the area), a children's film from the MGM library, a nostalgic revival and an action picture. MGM estimates that its system will be profitable when 15,000 to 20,000 hotel rooms are wired.

Meanwhile, the revolution is spreading at the production end. Shooting on videotape is making its sharpest inroads in cost-conscious California, and develop-

ments are rapid. 'We'll have to apologise in six months for the best jobs we do today,' says Mel Sawelson of Consolidated Film Industries, which along with Technicolor and Vidtronics handles most film and video post-production work in Hollywood. Jack McClenahan, of Trans-American Video, suggests that in five to eight years most big-screen features will be shot on videotape, and that within eighteen months all U.S. TV series may be videotaped.

The Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler, a theatrical feature shot entirely on videotape, was 'filmed' in 17 days—eleven fewer than if film stock had been used. At MGM, the *Young Dr. Kildare* series is being shot with Trans-American Video equipment, each half-hour episode shooting in one day (not two and a half days, as is standard for comparable series). Sawelson, McClenahan and Joe Bluth, of Technicolor's Vidtronics division, agree that cinemas should still project features on film and that those features should still be shot on film. But later this year, a laser disc recorder from Philips should be on the market, as well as a laser beam recorder from CBS. Sawelson's CFI, along with Rank and the National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA), have firm orders for the CBS recorder. This machine, according to Sawelson, might be the answer to transferring videotape to film with no loss of quality.

Hollywood video technicians are beginning to worry about artistic factors, indicating a desire to 'protect' the reputation of tape as a viable medium in competition with film. 'Film people who say tape is no good are ignorant,' says Joe Bluth. 'Tape projects better on TV screens than film, and it is approaching the level of acceptability for big screens. We are evolving into an electronic world.'

AXEL MADSEN

Roundheads in action in Kevin Brownlow's 'Comrade Jacob'. Terry Higgins in foreground; Ernest Vincze at camera





Donald Sutherland in 'Don't Look Now', a new feature by Nicolas Roeg shot largely in Venice

Themroc

Claude Faraldo and Michel Piccoli were in London to publicise the opening of *Themroc*. Faraldo (scarcely better known in France than he is in this country) conceived, scripted and directed the film; Piccoli, who put up the money for the production, plays the title role of a rather hairy worker who freaks out at work, sleeps with his sister, turns his room into a kind of aerial cave and starts roasting policemen for supper.

With its invented language and equal disregard for social and artistic conventions, *Themroc* has rightly been hailed for breaking down more barriers than its hero does walls, and it's tempting to see it as applied Godard, the long-awaited return to zero. Faraldo, however, is more pragmatic about it, and prefers to see it as applied autobiography. 'I'm not really interested in film technique or theory. And I've never really thought about the question of form. All I know is that, as far as the cinema's concerned, I hate perfection and I hate beauty... because they're intimidating for the people who've never had access to Culture with a capital C... I just thought it would be interesting to cock a snook at language, because language is a social barrier too. It's a form of discrimination, a wall it took me a long time to break through.

'I started work when I was thirteen—obviously as an unskilled worker! I started out as a telegraph boy, and after that I spent ten years, until I was 26, delivering wine and mineral water... to houses without lifts. I was a human lift. I was a member of the Communist Party (in my neighbourhood, la Butte Rouge, that was as automatic as going to

catechism) and I was a Union delegate (in the CGT). But then we had some trouble over a strike and I gave that up. And I suddenly realised the complete uselessness of the work I was doing... Because people in factories aren't working to provide society with its means of survival; they're just there to provide for themselves.

'I think it's important to undermine the work ethic. Work isn't moral, it's degrading. And I wanted to show this in *Themroc*, because most artists who talk about workers tend to talk for them, and to be so demagogic about it that the workers end up being the real vehicles of bourgeois morality. Far more than the middle-classes. Like the French Communist Party, they really believe in the sanctity of the family.' (The French Communist Party, incidentally, has made no bones about its dislike of *Themroc*.) 'But families aren't democratic, and I see no reason why you should automatically love your father or accept his authority.

'Anyway, I figured that I was unlikely to die of hunger in a rich society and that I could afford to be a parasite for a while. So I started to hang around Montparnasse, because I'd noticed some interesting-looking people when I was delivering there and no one had told me that it wasn't the artists' quarter any longer. And I listened a lot and spoke very little and generally tried to latch on to culture. Finally, I made it by the dunce's door—as an actor. I got by because I had a loud voice. But then I began to miss whatever it was I'd had before... a kind of political sense of where I fitted in. I wanted to express myself. I made a film, *La Jeune Morte*, about a father and son being eaten by dogs, but it was so consciously 'artistic' that I can't bear to look

at it now. And then I wrote a play, because I thought dialogue would force me to use words more precisely. And then I made *Bof*, and Michel Piccoli liked the film and offered to help me if I wanted to make another one.'

For Piccoli, despite the international stardom which he finds irrelevant but useful, the collaboration with Faraldo is a logical step in a career which he defines as 'an attempt to work with people who are concerned about the present, not nostalgic for the past or satisfied with success.' He's interested in subjects which shake up people's ideas (twenty years ago he was in the first productions of plays by Ionesco and Beckett, and he's made five films with Buñuel). Unlike Faraldo perhaps, Piccoli considers *Themroc* to be an individualist rather than an anarchist film; like him, however, he believes that films can only pose problems, not impose solutions, and that it's not enough to work for oneself.

Piccoli has now set up his own production company, with a view to getting out of the system's clutches and helping other people to do the same. Faraldo says his film will have failed unless it inspires at least three other workers to get out of the factories and recognise that they don't need much education or technical training to talk about what they know. Both of them agree that laughter is the easiest way to challenge people's attitudes, which is one of the reasons *Themroc* makes fun of all the accepted authority figures from bosses to policemen.

Certainly the film was made with a disrespect for authority subtler than its hero's but not dissimilar. To obtain permission to use the various public locations, Faraldo wrote 'five or six false scenarios.' For the scene where

Piccoli walks along the underground waving his fist at the passing trains, they arrived at the Métro with their false script and a hand-held camera. 'One moment we were on the platform, the next we were in the tunnel! Obviously, the station-master had to turn off the electricity. He didn't know what was happening. And by the time he'd got back from making his 'phone call, it was all over.'

JAN DAWSON

A Bergman Marriage

For six Wednesday evenings this spring Swedish television has been showing Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*, a series of 50-minute programmes made directly for TV. On these evenings, half of Sweden has taken the 'phone off the hook, and in thousands of homes people have used the Bergman series as a basis for discussion on the problems of living together. The destiny of the couple, Johan and Marianne, has been followed with the kind of interest that surrounded the richer and more gaudy gallery of characters in *The Forsyte Saga*.

In his first TV series (he previously made for television a documentary about his home island Fårö and the film *The Rite*), Bergman holds to his classical *hammerspiel* tradition. Johan and Marianne (Erland Josephson and Liv Ullmann) completely dominate the drama. In two episodes they are the only characters; in others Bergman has introduced a couple of accessories to comment on or mirror their drama. Johan is a doctor, Marianne is a lawyer. They have been married some ten years, and have two daughters. They have what people would call 'an ideal marriage'.

Bergman introduces us to this seeming idyll via an ironic stratagem. In the first scenes of the first episode Johan and Marianne are visited by a journalist from a woman's weekly, who is inspecting the home and the relationship, asking treacherous questions and giving indiscreet sidelong looks. It is a malicious introduction, where nothing is allowed to break through the illusion. The journalist—and the audience—is presented with a solid façade: well-brushed children, a tidy home and a couple of well-expressed definitions on the notorious questions about love and happiness. But the cracks are there, and they widen as the series proceeds. Johan and Marianne's existence is by no means free from problems. They talk with insight and awareness about their situation, but when a conversation risks becoming inflammable, they retreat via some suitable excuse. They try to come closer to each other, but they seem afraid of the touch, a touch which is real and serious and which might threaten their habits of life.

Scenes from a Marriage is to a large extent a counterpoint to *The Touch*; and as in *The Touch*, Bergman seems to mean that you

have to go through a passion to be able to find your real self, your own face. You have to break loose from the comfortable prisons offered by the bourgeoisie and search for overwhelming experiences. Here, the husband one day, without warning, announces that he wants to leave his wife. For some time he has been seeing another woman, Paula. They are now planning to go to Paris for six months. Johan has got a scholarship and wants to leave immediately. The confession is brutal, and Marianne's world falls apart. What will the children, their parents, their friends say? Her shock is no less when she discovers that their friends have long known about Johan's affair.

This break-up takes place in the third episode, and the rest of the series shows how husband and wife, separately and together, arrive at a kind of private insight into themselves. In the fourth episode Johan looks Marianne up after his return from Paris. He regards the affair with Paula as important but a failure, and shows an unexpressed longing to come back to his wife. She confesses that she is still in love with Johan, but she doesn't dare to get involved with him again.

In the fifth episode Marianne visits Johan at his office. She brings the forms for their divorce, but she also tries to seduce him. They quarrel and start to fight. In the final episode some ten years have passed. Both Johan and Marianne have remarried, and they have both reached a new kind of independence and understanding.

Bergman can be described as a conservative anarchist. He describes the moral life of his main characters exactly as they live themselves: quietly, without hurry, without stressing the development of their feelings, their thoughts or conversations. His language is

listening, quiet, vigilant and understated. The style is even more close-up than in his recent films. The faces of the actors are Bergman's dramatic landscape.

The world Bergman reveals is the protected rooms of the bourgeoisie; and this has been the main reason for some strong criticism of both his films and his TV series. Bergman does not make any kind of links with the society surrounding the figures in his films, and the problems he dwells on are therefore considered too private and exclusive. Only the bourgeoisie can afford time and money for these problems. This is true, but it doesn't mean that the problems are irrelevant.

In one of his novels Dostoevsky lets one of his characters say (thus portraying Tolstoy): 'If I were a Russian novelist and if I had talent, I would always choose my characters from the Russian nobility, because only in this background do you find the outer appearance of fine discipline and noble motives...'

Bergman locks his problems up in the same kind of 'noble milieu', where pure and clear truths can be formed. But if *The Touch* or *Scenes from a Marriage* is Bergman's *Anna Karenina*, one misses here the network of contacts to a world outside which was always held open in Tolstoy's novel. In *Scenes from a Marriage*, for instance, Johan and Marianne's children are practically forgotten after the first episode. And when Bergman introduces other people around Johan and Marianne (the series is spiced with excellent bit performances from players like Bibi Andersson and Gunnel Lindblom), one would want to see either more of them or less, because they demand a place in the lives of the husband and wife.

Paradoxically enough, the episodes where Johan and Marianne are completely alone emerge as the

most engaging and emotionally true. Here the issues are clean and clear. Johan and Marianne are no ideal characters. They talk to us, shamelessly direct, vulnerable and unprotected. And we are allowed to share an experience.

STIG BJÖRKMAN

Festival Fantasies

Any English critic at a foreign festival is likely to rub his eyes at a programme which proclaims in bold capitals 'La Prédominance du Cinéma Anglo-Saxon'. But then this was the second French Festival of the 'Fantastique'—the one genre in which England leads the field, at least in quantity. Beginning last year in Nanterre, the Festival is the brainchild of Alain Schlockoff, editor of *L'Ecran Fantastique*. This year it moved to what looks like being a permanent home—a Paris cinema on the Rue de Montmartre—where from the 8th to the 15th April around forty features from seventeen countries were on display, including everything from Tarkovsky's *Solaris* to Hammer's *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*.

The emphasis of the Festival is on films previously unshown in France. Wisely it does not attempt an elaborate retrospective, as there are already three cinemas in Paris (including the celebrated 'Styx', where I was able to catch Tod Browning's *Devil Doll*) devoted virtually all year round to showing horror. The nation which elevated Poe to the rank of a major writer, and still rates the English Gothic novelists far more highly than we do over here, continues to manifest a considerable appetite for modern Gothic cinema, and the festival auditorium was packed night after night with young Parisians who seemed completely undaunted that most of the films were without subtitles.

Indeed the audience tended to manifest contempt for the handful of films that were French in origin. Jean Rollin, for example, whose vampire movies generally fall into the sexploitation category when they reach London, was booed after the première of *La Rose de Fer*, a plodding surrealist piece in the most banal *Midi-Minuit* tradition. Later Rollin's name became a byword at the Festival ('Rollinesque') for the kind of horror movies which appear to be merely calculated and disingenuous (though this was probably unjust). Another film in much the same vein was the Spanish *El Gran Amore del Conde Dracula*, with an unconvincing Paul Naschy playing the vampire and of all people Haydée Politoff—Rohmer's heroine in *La Collectionneuse*—in the title role. Quite apart from its overall shoddiness, the film (directed by Javier Aguirre) committed the unpardonable error of allowing a lovesick Dracula to plunge a stake into his own heart at the climax, which was quite enough to have all self-respecting vampires stir in their graves (and to set most of the audience buzzing with indignation).

Fortunately there were more positive audience manifestations to come. One of the most charming and consistently successful films turned out to be an adaptation of Jules Verne's *On the Comet* from the Czech director Karel Zeman. Until now I've found Zeman's whimsical fusion of animation and live action somewhat resistible, but here he distils it into an exotic style which is sensuously nostalgic and even reminiscent of Lewis Carroll. The farcical element which spoiled *Baron Munchausen* is still there, but now properly incorporated into a gently satirical story, which illustrates human folly in the context of a comet ride through space. Zeman's visual effects are also more beautiful and appropriate than ever before.

Two more films which came into the general fairytale category were a long Indian musical, *The Flying Man* (Pradeep Nayyar), which boasted an exotic princess strongly reminiscent of Carmen Miranda, and an almost camp Russian piece (*Through Fire and Water*) by Alexander Rohou which similarly recalled Hollywood in the 40s. On the American front AIP's *Blacula*, which one might have hoped would follow *Night of the Living Dead* into the interesting realms of political horror, proved a disappointment, being little more than a cut-price attempt to cash in on the appeal of the title.

The most publicised event was the world première of Hammer's *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, which marked the return of Terence Fisher to horror films after a gap of nearly five years. Fisher, who is a revered figure in French fantasy circles, was introduced in suitably laudatory terms by Robert Benayoun of *Positif*, and the applause which greeted his arrival was thunderous. His new film proved a typically confident elaboration of the Frankenstein

'Scenes from a Marriage': Liv Ullmann and Erland Josephson



motif much in the earliest and best tradition of Hammer, with Cushing in fine Satanic form as the Baron.

Most of the many British films on display had already been shown in this country, so I took the opportunity of catching three films which had just missed the Festival on account of their Paris opening dates. The first was Polanski's *What?*, made last year in Italy, which strikes me as the funniest film he's ever made, much more so than *Dance of the Vampires*. Marcello Mastroianni plays the languid and lecherous master of a weird, sexually depraved household which accidentally becomes the refuge of a naïve but attractive American girl (Sydney Rome). The theme of American innocence and European sophistication is explored with relaxed irreverence, and there's a wholly remarkable comic cameo from Hugh Griffith as the senile patriarch.

The two other movies which just missed Monsieur Schlockoff's expansive net were *L'Effroyable Machine de l'Industriel NP* (Silvano Agosti, Italy) and Alain Jessua's *Traitement de Choc*. Both suggest that, in Europe at any rate, political/social ideas are being incorporated into the horror genre more seriously than ever before; and perhaps because they have always been lurking in the background of the great fantasy myths, it is probable that this form can accommodate them more easily than any other.

Jessua's film is a cunning remake of *The Island of Lost Souls* as a straight contemporary political allegory about the exploitation of foreign workers, and it remains sufficiently expert to avoid the obvious pitfalls. Agosti's film is more science-fiction oriented, about a plot to liquidate the Italian proletariat on Auschwitz lines, and equally powerful. It would add the finishing touch to what looks like being a useful annual fixture if—by the next Festival du Cinéma Fantastique—the 'Anglo-Saxon' films represented have also begun to move in on this new and potentially exciting territory.

DAVID PIRIE

Pollack's Hollywood History

'The Sixties were very disruptive, very chaotic for the movies. We can see that now, and we must find ourselves again. You ask me, 'Whither the cinema?' I think tomorrow is behind us, not in a straight line, but in the middle of a loose knot somehow, like a pretzel. *The Godfather* isn't a 1930s gangster movie but a 1930s certainty rethought.'

Sidney Pollack has made seven films since moving from theatre and television in 1965 with *The Slender Thread*. A period-conscious film-maker, he is now about to take on an emotional chapter of Jewish history—the resistance of the Masada Zealots against Rome in A.D. 73—after making Hollywood's first movie about a less



Polanski's 'What?'

than glorious chapter of Hollywood history. This is *The Way We Were*, which Pollack has just finished editing and which he calls—a little reluctantly—a political love story. The film stars Barbra Streisand as Katie Morosky, a Jewish, left-wing activist with a commitment to radical politics going back to her childhood; and Robert Redford as Hubbell Gardiner, American hero, WASP and winner in life. Katie and Hubbell first meet in college in the late 1930s, where Katie hates him by day and dreams of him by night. They meet again at the end of World War II, and marry. Hubbell is a writer who comes to Hollywood because screenwriters earn good money; Katie is still the idealist. When the 1948 House Un-American Activities Committee begins the witch-hunt and makes the 'unfriendly' witnesses a household word as the Hollywood Ten, a college classmate calls Katie a one-time Communist.

The script was written by Alvin Sargent, David Rayfiel and Arthur Laurents, from Laurents' novel. Laurents himself was blacklisted (more or less for writing *Home of the Brave*, as it were). Producing the film is Columbia, whose co-founder, Harry Cohn, was one of the more vocal witch-hunt supporters. 'It's been a strange film for me,' says Pollack. 'It's half about the blacklist—I'd love to make a film about the witch-hunt, but this is not that. It's basically a love story, a story about two politically and socially opposite people who fail because of the pressures of the blacklist.'

'The whole thing is full of all sorts of sad commentaries. There was tremendous optimism at the end of the war. Everybody was terribly proud, the future seemed full of hope. The change from this was subtle and slow. A great many people turned inward and doubt

developed. After it was all over there was a sense of something having been lost. The simple distinction between right and wrong existed no longer. What Hubbell says will happen—that some fascist producer will hire a Communist writer to save his movie—actually did occur. A fascist producer did ask a Communist writer to rescue his picture. But *The Way We Were* intends to be just that—a love story set in the way we were.'

For the Masada film, *The Antagonists*, Pollack scouted locations in Israel earlier this year. After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 71, a thousand Jewish Zealots barricaded themselves on top of Mount Masada, a steep rock above the Dead Sea, swearing to fight to the last. Vespasian's general Silva besieged the fort, and after two years managed to set fire to the wall beams. When the Romans stormed through the flames, they found only piles of bodies. The Zealots had killed their women and children, and then themselves. The Romans counted 960 dead. 'What fascinates me,' Pollack says, 'is the rapport between Silva and Eleazar ben Jair, the Zealots' leader. On one side the political realism of Rome, and on the other religious fanaticism. During the two years of the siege, Silva managed to arrange a truce of sorts, a compromise that the Zealots could accept. Then the wheels of state began to grind, the dictates from the faraway capital and so on. Positions hardened. It's very modern.'

Pollack, who calls himself a less than militant Jew and says he doesn't want to make Israeli iconography, is also a little wary of the 'Cecil B. DeMille dimension' of *The Antagonists*. 'Collectively, all Israelis are of course for the Zealots, who have become folk heroes of modern Israel. Individually, however, they are fas-

cinated by Silva, the classic man of learning.' Shooting should begin in November, but there is a little hesitance, despite Universal's happiness with Norman Jewison's experience in Israel with *Jesus Christ Superstar*. *The Antagonists* will be expensive, and Pollack has still to find his Silva.

Popular demands, Pollack thinks, are pulling the cinema back from unstructured experimentation and radicalism. 'We're going back to the roots, I think. Look at the films that are popular, simple stories uniquely suited to be told in pictures. The 1960s have been a fantastic period for everybody. I think we lost our way, and we're now casting about for solid ground again.'

AXEL MADSEN

Oberhausen 1973

The Oberhausen motto, 'The Way to One's Neighbour' took a battering at this year's festival, as virtually every documentary struck a pugilistic stance—usually against the United States, of course, on account of Vietnam, but also against the Israelis, the South Africans, the totalitarian regimes in South America, and the Germans themselves. There was an air of acrimony about most of the evening programmes which militated against anything smacking of uncommitted aestheticism. (A reason, presumably, for the cool response to Borowczyk's hilarious short *A Special Collection*, which in neatly parading an array of 19th century erotic gadgets indirectly criticises the sombre, furtive quality of today's pornography—and today's festival audiences, too).

One also realised how powerfully entrenched the interview has become in the contemporary short film. It's a disease the cinema has contracted from TV, and is all too

easily an excuse for lack of imagination or understanding on the part of a director. At Oberhausen there were interviews with everyone, from Tupamaros to Islington housewives, from schoolchildren to guests at a Hungarian ball. The technique may result in laughter and enlightenment; but how much more subtle it is when a director like, say, Milos Forman achieves the same effect without forever waving that rather obscene grey stick in front of his characters.

There were, however, two areas of brightness at Oberhausen: the retrospective, devoted to 'The Fight against Nazi Germany', and the animation. Films like Huston's *San Pietro*, Esther Shub's *Spain*, and the *Why We Fight* series make today's propaganda broadsheets look crude. (Although Buñuel's *Spain*, dating from 1937, was a disappointment, leaving one wondering just how much the master was involved with this documentary.)

The animated offerings, notably from Canada, were first-class.



Trauberg, Yutkevitch and Kozintsev in 1922, the year of the *Left Stream* Exhibition

Street Musique displays Ryan Larkin's wide range of cartoon styles, while *The Wind* (director Ron Tunis) conveys an irresistible sense of movement. Both these films won awards, although Pierre Veilleux's *Dans la Vie* (also from the National Film Board) was probably the most original piece of animation on show, deploying trick perspectives and contrasting colour tones with great force and invention.

Good dramatic shorts were scarce. John Sharrad's *Scarecrow* fulfils the hopes of the BFI Production Board with its well-photographed study of an Irish farmer driven to madness in the drought of 1931; but like the other British films at Oberhausen it is more competent than inspired.

From the United States came a seven-minute allegory that stretched the resources of the medium to their utmost: *The End of One* describes a seagull slowly perishing, while a few paces away hundreds of other gulls peck inexorably at a dunghill. The vivid close-up photography, and the contrast between the ailing bird's ponderous movements

and the predatory thrusts of its companions, made this film one of the most gripping in the festival.

The documentary prize-winners were headed by the Polish *He Left One Fine Day*, describing a country feast which has been held every year since 1939, when a Pole left his village to serve in the army, and never returned. As the camera roves discreetly from face to face, one can almost visualise the guests as they must have been some thirty years ago. Rain falls to end the speeches and the drinking, but the director, Krzysztof Wojciechowski, allows one a final shot of a crane swooping over the fields like an ideal, or like a transmigrated soul; altogether a strange experience, communicating a stronger sense of loss than many a war film.

Finally, praise for the impoverished French farmer's wife who appears in Louis van Gasteren's *On ne sait pas... moi non plus*, responding with simple candour to the director's questions about modern living conditions. Here the interview technique is

The world belonged to the very young. He and Yutkevitch were barely sixteen when they were given their first theatre. Then came the discovery of Petrograd; and the legendary heroes of the day — Mayakovsky, Meyerhold, Blok — were seen close up and in the flesh. With a slightly older youth, Leonid Trauberg, and one or two others, Kozintsev and Yutkevitch established the Factory of the Eccentric Actor (FEKS). 'Eccentricism' was their chosen road to the then obligatory demolition of all existing theatrical practice and the discovery of new ways for art. They were hard times, but thrilling: 'A sort of fair was going on in the middle of every kind of privation.' Yutkevitch and Kozintsev exhibited in the 1922 *Left Stream* Exhibition (where Tatlin's 'Black and White Square' was first shown); and the critic Punin said scornfully of their impertinent collages, 'If you go on in this way, you'll end up in the cinema.' They did, of course; and the rest is history.

The magic of those heroic days was such that the teenage artists who lived them never seemed to grow old, or lose their wonder and discovery. The Kozintsev who made *Don Quixote* and *Hamlet* and *King Lear* seemed in many ways not so very different from the youngster who collaborated nearly half a century ago with Trauberg on *The Overcoat* and *New Babylon*, and later, in the 1930s, on the *Maxim* trilogy. In person, certainly, he always appeared strikingly youthful. Along with his air of an academic's slight abstraction went a very un-Russian line in humour and a delight in the absurd. His voice was distinctive and high-pitched; and even though his idiom was sometimes a little awry (his friends always received New Year cards inscribed 'Many Happy Returns of the Day'), he expressed himself ably and vividly in English. Only last summer he delivered an hour-long lecture in London, without notes, on the occasion of the first English showing of *King Lear*. Afterwards he was asked, among other things, why he had departed from the text, and kept the Fool alive at the end. 'Because,' he replied gently, 'I love him very much and didn't want him to die.'

DAVID ROBINSON

Grigori Kozintsev, 1905-1973

To know Grigori Kozintsev, who died in May at the age of 68, was to feel intimate contact with that first heroic age of Soviet art when everything seemed possible, when everyone was young, and when the future seemed boundless. In his autobiography—one of the most vivid reminiscences of those times—he recalled schooldays in Kiev during the Civil War, with bandits roaming the streets, corpses in the ditches and Shchors' troops riding through the town (memories that later served for *The Vyborg Side*); the thrill of escaping from school to work on an agit-train; the intoxication of riding through night streets on the back of a lorry, yelling the latest Mayakovsky verses.

C. A. Lejeune

C. A. Lejeune, who died at 76 on the last night of March, her birthday month, after some years of physical disability in her Pinner Hill home, was a pioneer of film criticism; though I believe that on the distaff side she was probably a later beginner than Iris Barry on the *Daily Mail*. It seems impossible that more than twelve years have passed since we both left active film criticism at the end of 1960, Caroline with 38 years of unbroken devotion to the art (she became *Observer* critic in 1928, after six years writing for the *Manchester Guardian*), myself with 39,

though I can claim to have been tentatively in print on the subject in 1913 and 1915.

Caroline was a shy woman and I am proud to have shared a close friendship with her, personally as well as professionally. We kept up correspondence at a long distance, until in the last few years blindness made writing almost impossible for her, and reading quite impossible. But still, as late as January this year, she managed to write me a last letter by the aid of a thick pen and a large magnifying glass.

Despite her retiring nature, Caroline, a tough Lancashire gal, and a graduate of Manchester University, was a hard worker. Besides her weekly *Observer* column, she wrote other weekly articles on films for various publications, as well as dabbling in amateur stage productions at Pinner, writing for television and broadcasting.

It was exciting to be a critic in the early days when we were trying to find out how to write about the new art, which called for treatment divorced from dramatic and literary criticism. We learned from close study and indeed friendship with the producers, directors and stars. We knew them in their homes. We watched them at work in the studios. We saw their 'rushes'. They shared their problems and showed us their work without benefit of public relations officers' help or interference. This on-the-side extra activity was not helped in the early days by the absence of co-operation from the trade. Press show dates were fixed in competition between firm and firm, until the present organisation was set up.

Caroline was one of the little band who also gave up Sunday afternoons to meetings of the original Film Society, to see what new films were coming from the Continent, when such advanced movies were denied public exhibition by British cinema owners. Her *Observer* public enabled her to discuss the virtues of these continental experiments. She persuaded her readers to 'have a go' and explained why it was worth while. She wrote brightly but seriously, only occasionally indulging bitchiness, normally so fair that even her victims held her in high esteem.

The late Richard Mallett wrote to me in the last few days of his life complaining bitterly that he had been deprived of the opportunity to see the new films. 'I have missed more than thirty films,' he said. 'I miss them so much.' It has always been impossible to persuade the film industry how much good critics are devoted to the search for good films. Caroline Lejeune was one of those critics: I think the cinema gained something from her presence.

JYMPSON HARMAN

Jympson Harman was film critic of the *Evening News* from 1921 until his retirement in 1960. His tribute to C. A. Lejeune, originally written for the Film Section of the *Critics' Circle*, has been slightly shortened for publication here.



ACTING WITH BRUSHES AND PAINT

David Robinson

The revolution for Richard Williams came after *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. The titles and linking sequences which his studio created for the film attracted enthusiastic praise, whatever critics thought of the rest of the picture. (The *New Yorker* commented icily: 'It's too bad Richardson didn't leave the Charge itself to Williams.') But Williams himself saw it as the close of a period of his development.

At the end of working on the film, he and a group of his collaborators saw *The Yellow Submarine* and *The Jungle Book*, which both came out at about the same time. 'The *Yellow Submarine* convinced us that we wanted to be finished with the kind of animation based on graphic tricks. The *Jungle Book*—leaving aside anything you may feel about its aesthetics or narrative methods—was a revelation. We realised how much Disney's techniques and discoveries had still to teach us; and we wanted to go back to school, to Grade One, to learn how

to make a character live and walk and talk convincingly. The graphic tricks that had done service for twenty years—the little figures that scuttle about on little mechanical legs and move in restricted, stylised ways—won't get you through half an hour. Critics had been saying how superior our work on *The Light Brigade* was to Disney's—it's been smart for a long time now to put down Disney. But we knew that the tricks of *The Light Brigade* wouldn't support characters and a story for twenty minutes. We wanted to go back to school.'

Happily, the admiration between the Williams and Disney studios was mutual. After seeing *The Jungle Book*, Richard Williams wrote a fan letter to Milt Kahl, whom he had (correctly) assumed to be responsible for the animation of the Tiger. Meanwhile, the Disney artists and animators had seen and admired *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Kahl visited the studio and saw Williams' 'private, unfinished films'.

Left: 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'
Below: '... the Cresta Bear becomes an exercise in characterisation'

Williams returned the visit to the Disney studios. The experience was somewhat different from a disillusioning earlier visit in 1946, when the 15-year-old Richard reached his Mecca in Burbank, only to be deeply shocked to see his idol chatting up in a professional manner a lady from *Newsweek*. Disappointing as it was, this was the only glimpse he ever had of his hero. In later years he has come, however reluctantly, to acknowledge that Disney was right about the value of P.R.

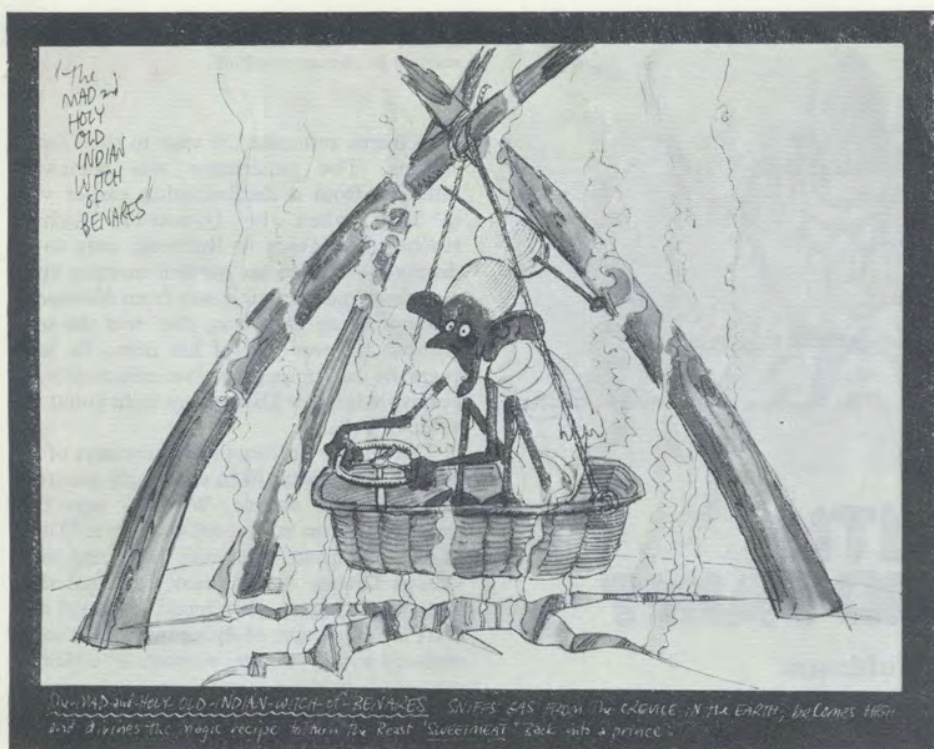
The Disney Studio, even in the days of the Master, has always been startlingly generous in sharing its secrets. Williams says that there is now an additional incentive. 'Many of the old great animators from the marvellous Disney development fear that they and their highly developed artistry and craft are in danger of dying out, never to be replaced by the younger individual "stylists", who tend, in their view, to go for "impact" while losing the traditional knowledge and skills of the Golden Age of animation.'

The secrets do not lie simply in basic technical knowhow—details like 'follow-through', the way an action is animated an instant beyond its naturalistic conclusion, to give extra impact—but almost more important, in purely organisational methods and routines. Animation depends more than many other fields of film-making on high organisational disciplines. 'A mislaid drawing can cost hours of waste,' Williams, despite his long-practised ability to project the personal image of the fey and scatty artist stumbling myopically around Soho Square, has a highly developed sense of organisation, and a fanatical interest in devising improvements to his dope sheets, route sheets, traffic control forms and all the other essential bureaucratic machinery which the cinemagoer never conceives of when watching the free, unfettered movement of an animated film. Williams delightedly tapped the Disney studio's forty-odd years of accumulated experience: 'There's nothing quite like their production folders. A lot of the secret of their success lies there. Flow of work is central to animation production.'

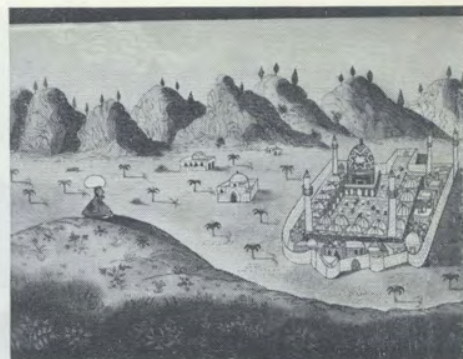
A return to the old craft tradition does not imply a wholesale acceptance of the Disney aesthetic notions. 'In my view the immediate future can and will see a new cohesion of the various disparate elements of animation into a going artistic and commercial concern... As one of the "modern" animators, or rebels against the traditional approach, I realised that much of what we were doing was only short term ground-breaking, and that we would eventually have to go back to school and absorb the achievements of our predecessors.'

'For the past five years our Studio has been consciously and deliberately studying ancient Winsor McKay experiments, and trying to digest and build on Disney procedures and principles, finding that in most cases our own so-called "innovations" had all been done in one form or another (even though in a different way) either in the Disney Golden Age from 1930 to 1940,

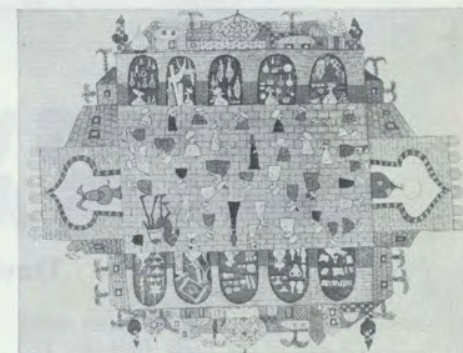




The Mad and Holy Old Indian Witch of Benares



Nasruddin greets the dawn



In the Persian market place

NASRUDDIN



The Great Mogul on his throne of dusky maidens



The Messenger



The reception at the Great Mogul's Court



The End



The Laughing Camel



The Indian Mogul's delegation set out to meet Nasruddin

Nasruddin travels home





'A Christmas Carol': Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present travel out to sea

or by Winsor McKay or the old Fleischer Studio.'

Williams' *A Christmas Carol*, made for television, was very much a try-out of the new approach, the effects of the return to the sources provided by Disney. In an interesting way the film combined the search for a more detailed and developed form of animation ('Acting with brushes and paint') and the experiments of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, in which Williams had endeavoured to absorb and animate the graphic styles of an earlier period—*Punch* and *Illustrated London News* illustrations of the 1850s. In *A Christmas Carol* too the drawings were very evidently rooted in meticulous research of the visual aspect of the period—working outwards from the original John Leach illustrations through study of the clothes and furnishing and architecture and artefacts and even the physiques of the time. Yet the film's graphics were never weighed down by study. The images—the transparent, rubbery ghost of Jacob Marley, the haunted skies through which the Spirits whirled the unhappy Scrooge—had an exhilarating freedom and movement.

For Williams the film remained to an extent experimental and limited. A lot of his erstwhile admirers felt themselves positively betrayed to see him revert to the long-out-of-fashion Disney style against which UPA and Williams himself had so violently and effectively reacted. The Oscar awarded this year to *A Christmas Carol* was, in the circumstances, a rather startling honour; though gratifying, and distinctly helpful in practical ways. For a few days at least every door in Hollywood was open; and Williams could talk about distribution for the feature film on which he has been working for upwards of six years, *The Amazing Nasruddin!* 'I had reason, in the end, to be quite glad of the awful sort of journalistic publicity I'd been getting that insisted on calling me "the New Disney"'. In general, distributors are suspicious of animated films. Not even suspicious; they just won't listen at all. Except when you say "Disney". Disney has

a magic, because he never lost money. So it helped when they heard me called "the New Disney"—imbued me with something of the Disney magic in their eyes.' He is now extremely optimistic of getting distribution for *Nasruddin!*

The Oscar not unnaturally also impresses clients for the television commercials which are the vital bread and butter for a British animation unit like Williams'—which can claim to be the largest independent animation studio in Britain, with a permanent staff of twenty-seven. For some time the unit has been able to choose its work in the commercial field. Even when he can choose, though, isn't Williams nervous that the commercials could simply take over? 'At one time I might have been. But now it actually works in the opposite direction. Instead of the commercials taking us over, we take them over. It's really a question of attitude. If you see them as a painful job that stands in the way of "art", something unpleasant to be got over as easily as possible, then they have taken you over. But we now look at every one of them as a technical exercise, a muscle tester, preparation for the big things. So perhaps we have to make a commercial with a bean can dancing. Well, instead of throwing up your hands and saying what a fool idea, you actually apply yourself to the problem. Well, how do you make a bean can do a soft shoe routine? Or the Cresta Bear becomes a fascinating exercise in characterisation. Every different commercial can present some basic point in animation. And of course when you come down to it, this is not just a case of the advertisers subsidising experiment. On the contrary, they are the gainers, because we're not just doing a routine job for them, but really extending ourselves, extending our grasp . . .'

In preparation for *Nasruddin!* 13 Soho Square has become a high-powered academy for animation. ('I love animation; I think I hate cartoons.') Even if its internal appearance is somewhat transformed by all the orderly chaos of an animation studio, the

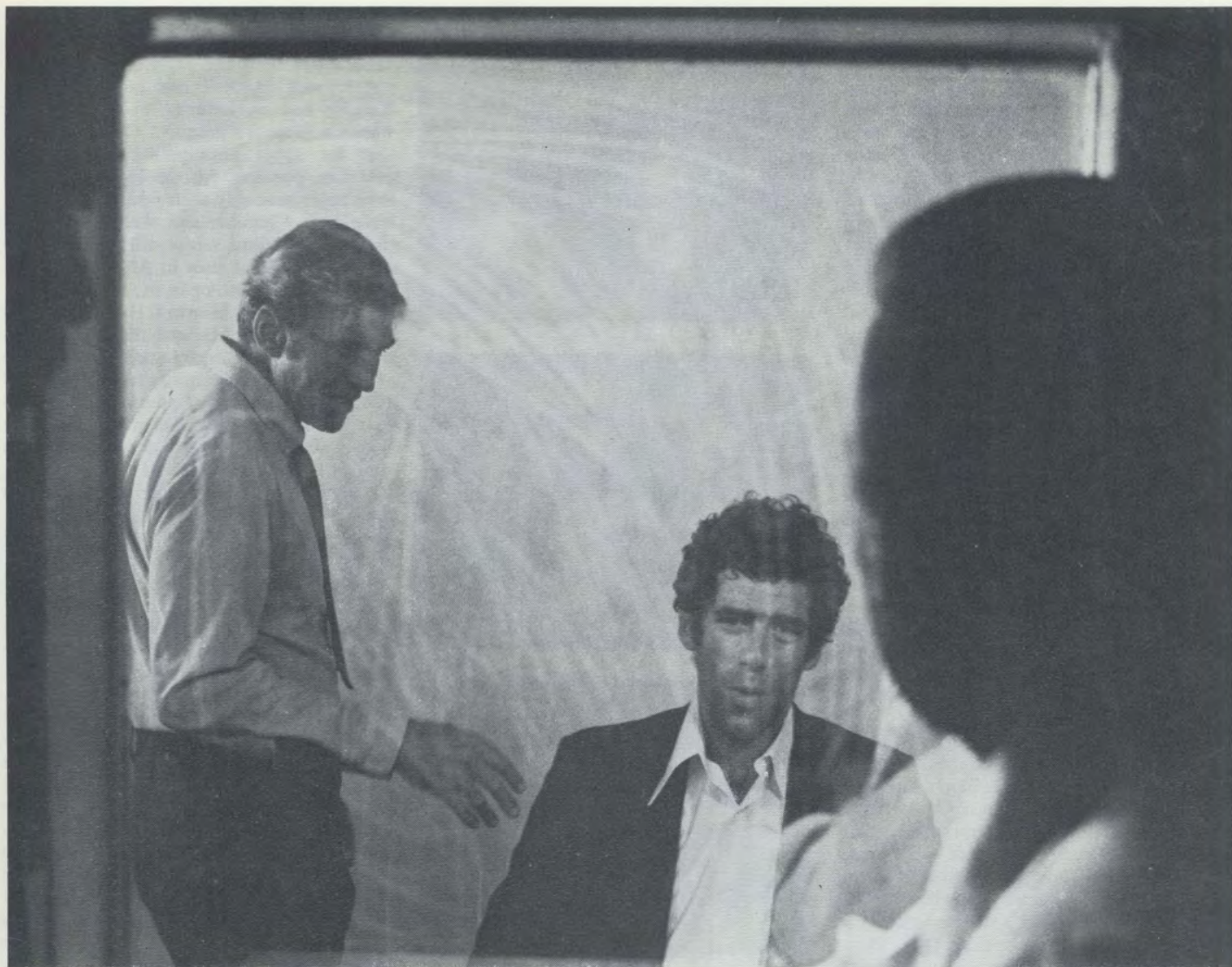
house—one of the last aristocratic mansions in the Square—seems somehow appropriate in its Georgian grace to Williams' dedication to the notion of a highly developed craft tradition. (So personal is the work of a good animator that the true aficionado can point to any scene or character in a Disney feature and tell from the style who animated it.)

This summer the work of the studio is being phased down so that the staff can benefit from instruction from some of the great Hollywood veterans. Ken Harris—for thirty years at Warners and the leading animator of Roadrunner and the Bugs Bunny series—has already been working for five years by mail on the Thief in *Nasruddin!*. Arthur Babbitt, who was with Disney from 1934 and animated Goofy, the Queen in *Snow White*, Pinocchio, Gepetto and the Mushroom Dance in *Fantasia* before going on to UPA (the lawyer in *Rooty-Toot-Toot*), and finally to Hanna and Barbera, will also be one of the Studio's 'visiting tutors'. Senior in years even to Babbitt, Grim Natwick was designer and animator of Betty Boop, and 'the only guy who could do the animation of *Snow White* herself believably. Remember that fantastic run down the staircase?' Natwick is around eighty, wants to get back to oils, and has declared that his work with Williams ('I'll just sit by and look over their shoulders') is his final contribution to animation. 'It's taken me five years to get the Mickey Mouse out of my palette.'

All the efforts and all the hopes are focused on *Nasruddin!*, which for six years has preoccupied the studio, and had every penny of profit ploughed back into it. Williams describes his seventy-five-minute feature about the adventures of the mythical Middle Eastern clown as 'banana-skin Ali Baba, or slapstick 1001 Nights'. The graphics are based on Persian miniatures; but all the sketches and preliminary material bear the unmistakable impress of the deep, zany and wild comic vision which goes with Williams' graphic skills, and the other somewhat strange combinations of talents required to run an animation unit.

Richard Williams with Vincent Price, on whom the Grand Vizier in 'Nasruddin!' is based





'The Long Goodbye': Elliott Gould as a befuddled Marlowe

Charles
Gregory

KNIGHT WITHOUT MEANING?

Philip Marlowe's back and the Seventies got him. Raymond Chandler's private eye, who survived threats from gangsters, gamblers, karate experts, cops, treacherous women, sadistic killers, has finally been defeated—by his own code and an age that doesn't need it. At least, so says Robert Altman in the latest Marlowe movie, *The Long Goodbye*. By casting a befuddled, long-suffering Elliott Gould as Marlowe, Altman has significantly altered Chandler's principled hero. He has also improvised innumerable scenes and small bits that dramatise Marlowe's inability to cope with the times.

Time magazine critic Jay Cocks spoke for all traditionalists when he accused Altman of mocking 'an achievement to which at his best he could only aspire.' Altman's ambition, however, was more sweeping than most of his audience realised, for Marlowe and his fellow shamuses, gumshoes and dicks are not the only target for the director's satire and anger. An entire genre of tight-lipped, cynical but grimly romantic films is being criticised and parodied in *The Long Goodbye*. The plot and characters come, albeit loosely, from Chandler's 1953 novel, but the characterisation and the ambience come from films like *Double Indemnity*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Nightmare Alley*, *Scarlet Street* and the like, as

well as from the 1940s private eye movies. Elliott Gould does not really draw on the previous screen incarnations of Marlowe; rather his models are the weak, pliable men from the *film noir* like John Garfield, Fred MacMurray and Edward G. Robinson. Gould's co-star, Nina van Pallandt, who will always be better known for her supporting role in the Clifford Irving-Howard Hughes hoax, plays the seductive and destructive 'scarlet woman'. The hard-edge, chrome and formica scenery of Southern California has remained an apt setting for such a world. Rainy streets, neon signs, cocktail lounges, interrogation rooms, endless mirrors, strange sanatoriums, baroque mansions, gangster penthouses, dingy detec-

tive offices and all-night diners repeat themselves endlessly, as do the characters: the dissembling women, the greedy parasites, the sexually weak men, the sadistic gangsters, the Elisha Cook Jr. types, the decadent rich, the brutal husbands, and the sardonic detective who observes them all. Such a world is as self-contained and unreal as those of the musical comedy or the Western. Few surprises are possible within such ritualistic environments. Everything depends on the style with which the various elements are handled.

'It is not a fragrant world,' as Chandler wrote in commenting on Dashiell Hammett's novels, 'but it is the world you live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make very interesting and even amusing patterns out of it. It is not funny that a man should be killed, but it is sometimes funny that he should be killed for so little, and that his death should be the coin of what we call civilisation.' That quotation defines clearly what the world is as far as Chandler, Hammett, Graham Greene, James Cain* and the other *auteurs* from this genre are concerned—such as Wilder, Lang, Preminger, Hawks and lesser knowns. Even the films that do not deal specifically with crime still depict

*Chandler's first Hollywood job was working on the film version of Cain's novel *Double Indemnity*.

a world in which 'gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities.'

I suspect that Altman might agree with much of this world view, but he clearly rejects the rigidity of the genre form and its restrictive values. Many of his films have mocked or reversed the conventions of a particular genre—war movies in *M*A*S*H*, Westerns in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, and now *The Long Goodbye*. What particularly bothers Altman is Marlowe as hero, the defiantly poor individualist surviving in a corrupt world: 'I am so money greedy that for twenty-five bucks a day and expenses, mostly gasoline and whisky, I do my thinking myself...' Altman only accepts heroes who constantly deny their heroism, like Gould and Donald Sutherland in *M*A*S*H*. His mockery of the gunfighter (McCabe) and the mod detective (Inspector Shaft in *Brewster McCloud*) underlines this theme. Altman has survived the sixties by learning to distrust heroes and heroics; his romanticism takes a different direction. The overwhelming competence and control of Marlowe is too much for him, because his vision does not include the possibility of control. The moment is all that survives in his work. Even the pragmatic, ambitious whore Mrs. Miller ducks out of reality with opium at key moments, suggesting that her control is only a pipe-dream.

Altman's pre-release publicity and interviews stressed that he wanted to say 'a long goodbye' to the Marlowe hero; and the Chandler novel has been warped to make Marlowe's major virtues little more than mere vices. He sees the private eye as just another narrow American moralist who would be judge and jury for everyone. In Altman's view, Marlowe's admired integrity is limited, suspect, even dangerous. How can one dare to dispense justice in an unjust world? Altman rejects Chandler's romantic description of his hero: 'But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid.' Altman cannot swallow, 'He is the hero, he is everything.' Heroes are fools, after all. Altman probably cherishes the line from *Raymond Chandler Speaking* (which he distributed to the entire cast and crew) which says, '...any man who tried to be honest looks in the end either sentimental or plain foolish.' Altman is determined to be neither.

Yet Marlowe is foolish, sentimental, and heroic. That he continues his allegiance to the 'old verities', as William Faulkner called them, 'love and honour and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice', indicates his continuing heroism in an infinitely corrupt world. Marlowe satisfies because he knows the world as it is, yet clings to a vision of the world as it might be. 'If there were enough like him, the world would be a very safe place to live in, without becoming too dull to be worth living in.' Without the rituals of genre, without the good/evil conflict of the Westerns and the private eye films, we would be lost. They are that last affirmation of possible justice in a society which has the evidence continually piling up against it.

Unfortunately, few directors have been able to see how important to our survival Marlowe is. He has too often been used and confused in Hollywood. Chandler's novels have been used for such ignominious ends



Three Marlowes with clients and witnesses. Bogart in the Sternwood conservatory; Esther Howard and Dick Powell; Florence Bates, Nancy Guild and George Montgomery

as the sequel to the first Tony Rome/Frank Sinatra potboiler and a 'Falcon'/George Sanders quickie. Marlowe, in Hollywood's eye, has become interchangeable with all the other private eyes. And Altman, the Hollywood rebel, has fallen into this peculiarly show biz trap. Marlowe is not just another forerunner of those 'with licences to kill'. He possesses an integrity that cannot be mass-distributed. A genuine romantic in a genre populated by amoral, posturing toughs, Marlowe created a style, a distinctive world view that most of his rivals lack.

That Marlowe has survived the casual treatment Hollywood has given him over the years suggests the potency of the character. He has suffered from inadequate scripts, or actors, or funds, or directors; yet his magic remains. The Hemingway hero was forged in the pages of *Black Mask Magazine* by Hammett, Chandler, Lester Dent and others for an audience that never dreamed of castration in Paris, but longed for heroes to express that naïve American combination of idealism and cynicism. But Marlowe was always special, lifted to heights by Chandler's metaphors which knighted him in the middle of *The Big Sleep*. Marlowe arrives at his apartment to find thumb-sucking Carmen Sternwood naked in his

bed. He glances at his ever-present chess problem, strangely absent from the films. 'The move with the knight was wrong. I put it back where I had moved it from. Knights had no meaning in this game. It wasn't a game for knights.' Chandler wrote that in 1939, anticipating Altman-type criticism, perhaps. Altman has taken Marlowe more seriously than other film-makers have done. Chandler and even the worst of the Marlowe films never suffered from the righteousness that rises in Altman when he talks about his film, or in the film itself.

In 1946, when Howard Hawks directed the best of all the Marlowe films, he undertook the task as an exploitation sequel to the 1944 Bogart/Bacall teaming in *To Have and Have Not*. The cultist admiration for this film has always depended more upon the Bogart/Bacall mystique and the Hawks auteurs than on Marlowe and Chandler, for most of the films using Marlowe have not survived in either cult or critical eyes. Yet somehow together the films represent a body of work that has solidified a legend.

For the genuine Hawks auteurs, *The Big Sleep* stands uneasily between Hawks' adventure films and his comedies. Marlowe's dry wit was amplified and enriched by the screenwriting team of Leigh Brackett, Jules Furthman, and William Faulkner, who also improved on the sophisticated poses of Bacall and Bogart begun in *To Have and Have Not*. Bacall's role was enlarged and somewhat sweetened, so that she resembles the witty and competent women from Hawks' best comedies while maintaining her own sultry and somewhat sinful aura. Much of the dialogue has that same mixture of craziness, innuendo and speed which distinguishes films like *His Girl Friday* and *Bringing Up Baby*. Yet the essential drive of the film shows a professional at work, the man of integrity trying to function in a corrupt world; for Hawksian heroes are not that different from Marlowe whether they are flying the mail in South America, going up river in big sky country, or enforcing the law in Rio Bravo.

These categories are borrowed—and much simplified—from Robin Wood's useful book on Hawks. Wood, however, finds no place for *The Big Sleep* in his categories and relegates the film to the back of the book. He underrates both Marlowe and Chandler, finding Marlowe 'an arrested adolescent' while Chandler himself is dismissed as 'tough superficiality'. Only Hawks' customary objectivity frees the film from the burden of the Marlowe/Chandler 'slick and crude sensibility'. Wood, however, has identified two virtues in the film not usually mentioned in discussions: charm and tenderness. What he underestimates is Chandler's contribution to the portrayal of these virtues. The charm undoubtedly does belong to Hawks' skilful handling of the genre's rituals and conventions and to the light-hearted mocking of them in both script and acting. Two examples not in the original novel should suffice: the phoning-the-cops scene where Bogart and Bacall try to convince the desk sergeant that he called them, and Bogart's scene with the glasses-shedding bookstore clerk (Dorothy Malone). Yet Chandler provided the model and general style on which the scriptwriters built. Moreover, the tenderness, including the scenes Wood alludes to, is all in the book to



'The Big Sleep': the death of Harry Jones (Elisha Cook, Jr., Humphrey Bogart)

the same extent that it exists in the movie. Marlowe's sympathy for the old general, for Jonesy, and that pervasive protectiveness for the helpless can be found as a continuing thread in the original novel.

The charm lies also in that sense of ritual which flows from the genre forms. Things happen; characters speak; as they always have and always will. The difference lies in the rightness of the stylish dialogue, and the depth of sympathy Bogart imparts without ever deviating from his tough surface. The scene where Canino (Bob Steele) murders Harry Jones (Elisha Cook, Jr.) as Marlowe watches helplessly from the next office demonstrates both of these qualities. From Canino's sneered 'What do you want me to do, count to three like in the movies,' to Marlowe's softly spoken tribute and anguished look over Jonesy's dead body, the scene embodies all that is best in the film.

Leigh Brackett evidently needed her collaborators, for her script for *The Long Goodbye* lacks the stylistic virtues of the Hawks film. The humour resembles the improvised, throwaway humour of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* more than the quick-paced snap of the *Big Sleep* dialogue. While *The Long Goodbye* finds a visual style that matches its mood and theme, the dialogue limps along on the crutches of profanity and adolescent wisecracks.

The Big Sleep, on the other hand, creates a total atmosphere despite the seemingly casual approach and the eye-level camera. Raymond Chandler wrote to his London publisher Hamish Hamilton praising Hawks as 'a director with the gift of atmosphere and the requisite touch of hidden sadism.' The opening scene depicting Marlowe's arrival at the Sternwood mansion and his interview with the dying general in his tropical conservatory establishes the tone of the entire movie. Corrupt blood, isolated and arrogant wealth, the unbuyable professional, the sense of overheated voyeurism and pretension without style, combine to create an artificial and decadent world in need of order, in need of a knight to bring fertility and principle to a waste land.

In the novel Marlowe discovers a naked Carmen Sternwood in his bed, but the movie code of those years forced Hawks and

his writers to avoid this scene and other explicit references to sex, dope and pornography that are woven into the novel. Yet somehow the film reflects all this to the sophisticated viewer without ever drawing the ire of the censors or even the notice of the prudes. Martha Vickers as the giggling, thumb-sucking Carmen provided the erotic model for dozens of future baby dolls. The famous Bacall-Bogart exchange in which they express their respective sexual styles in racing metaphors belongs to the actors as well as the writers. Most of all, the film's claustrophobic look has increased with the passing of the years. The familiar faces, the sound stages instead of locations, the potted palm sleaziness of even the opulent sets, and the lighting which often resembles the UFA-Warner Brothers *film noir* style, contribute to the enclosed feeling, where the audience become voyeurs staring through a hole at the underbelly of our society. That feeling is pure Chandler. These streets are 'mean' indeed, in the sense also of Arthur Morrison's *Tales of Mean Streets* chronicling the East End of London in the 1890s, where live and 'hide human creeping things'. The later Chandler/Marlowe films, like the Paul Bogart/James Garner *Marlowe* and the Jack Smight/Paul Newman *Harper* (which owes as much to *The Big Sleep* as to the Ross Macdonald novel *The Moving Target*), open things up too widely with technicolor and location shooting, losing much of the original atmosphere. *The Long Goodbye* resembles the later pictures in this way, although Altman's visual style is more consistent with his vision of Southern California today.

But the Marlowe films that immediately preceded and followed *The Big Sleep* failed to catch as thoroughly the Chandler atmosphere, even though they too were sound stage products. The better of the two is the 1945 *Murder, My Sweet*,* directed by Edward Dmytryk with Dick Powell as Marlowe. (The novel *Farewell, My Lovely* was used more recently as the model for a Tony Rome/Frank Sinatra thriller without thrills.) Dmytryk has captured the claustrophobic feeling and the sense of society's low life in such characters as Moose Malloy (Mike Mazurki), the romantic brute in love with an image magnified by years in prison; Claire Trevor doing her familiar number as Mrs. Grayle, the hard-boiled broad-on-the-make; Jules Amthor (Otto Kruger), the quack psychiatrist-mystic who preys on Southern California's insecure rich; and Lieut. Randall (Don Douglas), the inevitable weary cop. Attempting to escape from his tenor type-casting in Busby Berkeley musicals, Dick Powell achieves one of those rare, genuine breakaways from image. Next to Bogart, his is the best rendering of Marlowe. Powell's detective is more insolent and boyish—and more of a loser. He loses more fights than he wins, lacks the almost supernatural attraction towards women demonstrated by Bogart, and lacks Bogart's firm command. (As Chandler once wrote, 'Bogart can be tough without a gun.') He generates a certain seedy charm, delivers his wisecracks with aplomb and strikes a wicked match on a marble Cupid's backside. He

remains more in the area of Robin Wood's description—boyish and slick—without the pejorative connotations. Elliott Gould's Marlowe has more affinities with this characterisation, for Gould wisecracks and pouts and loses even more than Powell. The trouble is that Gould's Marlowe thinks he is in as much control as Powell; but he's not. Therein lies the heart of Altman's thesis about Marlowe and all private dispensers of justice.

Dmytryk wished only to emulate Chandler, not to analyse or criticise. He and his scriptwriter John Paxton 'borrowed' as much from Chandler's original prose as did Hawks and his writing team; perhaps even more because they also used the literary metaphors for their visual images. Thus, when Chandler writes in Marlowe's voice, 'A black pool opened at my feet; I dived in,' Dmytryk fills his screen with swirling ink. But this expressionism is so heavy-handed that it becomes unintentional parody instead of loyal adaptation. Critics correctly compared the film to Billy Wilder's minor classic *Double Indemnity*, but without pointing out that the latter film maintains the slickness and seediness of the forties genre films without using the excessive camerawork that burlesques the original material.

Guns, girls and Marlowe. Claire Trevor and Dick Powell; Nancy Guild and George Montgomery; Gayle Hunnicutt and James Garner



**Farewell, My Lovely* in Britain.

Claire Trevor in the Dmytryk film does get away with murder in the same style as her counterpart Barbara Stanwyck, but the Wilder film maintains a total cynicism, while Dmytryk softens Trevor in hopes of creating more sentiment. Such compromises pave the way only to competence. Dmytryk and Paxton, unlike Hawks and his writers, do not know when to stop borrowing and just plain steal. (As Faulkner once said, the lesser artist borrows while the great ones steal from others and make it truly their own.) Brackett-Furthman-Faulkner actually extend and improve on Chandler's dialogue while maintaining the spirit of the original.

Yet *Murder, My Sweet* remains one of the most satisfying Hollywood ventures into Chandler's world. It reflects a genuine respect for the material, and the actors succeed more than most in rendering the essential tinny hardness and open duplicity that marks Chandler's vision, while catching just enough of that tenderness Robin Wood felt in *The Big Sleep*. Powell and Mazurki achieved one of the more memorable relationships from that period. Despite more than a touch of con man George and simple-minded Lennie from the then popular *Of Mice and Men*, the characters exist vividly within their own context of *Black Mask Magazine* transferred to the screen. Mazurki's bewildered loyalty and ignorant strength touch a desperate and tender nerve, while Powell's irascible concern reflects the intelligent man's response to the comic and dangerous brute in us all.

Powell's performance has even more resonance when compared with those of the two Montgomerys, Robert and George, who hastened to the sound stages in early 1947 trying to capitalise on what they hoped was a cresting wave. Unfortunately, they proved to be wet blankets, for they starred in the last Marlowe films for twenty-two years. Robert Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake* ranks with the more pretentious and hollow efforts of the decade, even making the heavy expressionism of Dmytryk look by comparison as austere as Hawks. Montgomery, in his dual role as star and director, claimed that his subjective camera would involve the viewer more by placing him inside the head of the hero, so that Chandler's first person narrative is duplicated by a first person visual. As everyone knows, the reverse proved true: people were distanced by the unnatural camera angles and the lack of the hero's tangible presence. Even the best performances in the movie—Lloyd Nolan as the corrupted cop; Audrey Totter as Adrienne Fromsett, a frigid but sexually promising career woman—are thwarted by being forced to play to awkwardly placed cameras throughout. Montgomery's clenched teeth delivery strains the narrative in an equally awkward manner, missing Marlowe's romanticism and tenderness. Only occasionally does the narrative or the dialogue rise even to the level of the 'flip', which Chandler condemns as shoddy imitation in his essay 'The Simple Art of Murder'.

George Montgomery's Marlowe in *The Brasher Doubloon** (directed by John Brahm) is less forced and even tries to reflect the



Office of a private eye. Robert Montgomery (1947) and James Garner (1969)

chess-playing, pipe-smoking side of Marlowe, but is eventually smothered by the mechanical nature of the whole production. Only Florence Bates, as the murderous and domineering mother, possesses the necessary style to generate anything like the achievement of the first two films. Nancy Guild as the manipulated mouse of a secretary projects little beyond the trembling of the threatened heroine, while Conrad Janis as the wealthy but slimy son resembles more the cheap hoods in *The Big Sleep* than a dissolute scion of the decadent rich.

The film opens with a nod to *The Big Sleep*, by showing the private eye approaching the mansion of the prospective client with a voice-over narration using Chandler's original descriptions. Little of interest happens after that until the climactic scene, where the detective gathers the suspects to watch a film (in the book photographs) of the murder in order to entrap Florence Bates. The film within a film device is practically the only moment of creative thinking in a production whose general level of competence is of the kind now usually associated with Made-For-TV movies. The change in movie-going tastes and booking patterns is dramatised by the opening of this minor film at New York's Roxy, an ornate cathedral to movie dreams, with a stage show by Jack Benny and his radio troupe and a special guest appearance by Fred Allen. A modern comparison might be an American International horror film opening at Radio City Music Hall with the entire cast of Archie Bunker's *All in the Family* 'on the big stage'.

Yet even in such a low level production, Philip Marlowe's magic partially carries the limitations of cast, script and direction. Marlowe, the relentless professional, the idealistic cynic, is an endlessly appealing figure to audiences, who fulfil fantasies of great personal need on the smallest possible

grounds. A mechanistic lonely crowd badly needs the kind of romantic individualist that Chandler gives them. Marlowe—and his genre—gives meaning and form to a world sadly lacking in either. But the need for such heroes ran foul of commercial shallows and brutalisation, as the cheap detectives grew even cheaper. Gradually, the detective disappeared in favour of the more mod James Bond, Matt Helm, Harry Palmer, Modesty Blaise *et al.*, *ad nauseam*. Gadgetry replaced wits; chauvinism replaced principles; good versus evil became the West versus Communism; and the mean streets blurred into jet streams. I suspect that the morality of such films is the real target of Altman's *The Long Goodbye*. The casual wielder of political justice, not the working-class gumshoe, is the real villain of our times.

In 1969, however, Paul Bogart, Stirling Silliphant and James Garner tried with *Marlowe* to bring back the archetypal vision of the forties and apply it to the present, with its arrogant TV stars, cynical go-go dancers, nervous ad executives, spaced-out hippies, wandering farm girls from the heartland, etc. Much of the film deserves *New York Times* critic Roger Greenspun's label of the 'most promising sleeper of 1946.' However, he found the film too disjointed; the two decades, forties and sixties, cannot combine, the effect is just too disorienting. But the various artists have obviously struggled to find meeting points: decay, corruption, small lost lives and unexpected betrayals still exist.

Even in colour the film still possesses some of the 1940s flavour: seedy rooms, flashing neon, down-at-heel offices, luxurious penthouses, slick restaurants and private planes. One scene at a crowded lunch counter reflects the mood at its best. Marlowe questions Orfamay Quest about her involvement in murder and other sordid dealings, while the eyes and minds of the people at the counter glaze over in protective emptiness.

Despite Stirling Silliphant's flat script, *Marlowe* does possess style: a style based on characterisations and visuals harking back to the forties film noir. William Daniels provides his TV executive with the right range of facial tics, restless hands, shifting eyes, and a desperate resignation that stays just this side of parody. Sharon Farrell's country girl (the 'little sister' of Chandler's original title), Orfamay Quest, is driven by envy and righteousness with a dash of hayseed that is pure American Gothic. Carroll O'Connor re-creates all those forties cops who have to deal with smart-ass private eyes, and pushes the character to the very edge of frustration and beyond. The really memorable performance comes from Rita Moreno as Dolores Gonzales, the 'loyal' friend of TV star Mavis Wald. She not only infuses a powerful eroticism into the role, but also conveys the agony of envy and bitterness that must come from watching a less attractive friend become a national symbol of sweetness and beauty. All of these achievements come despite the dialogue, which plods and plods and plods. The actors overcome the pedestrian to a great extent through their charm (especially Garner), their skill (Daniels), and their physical rightness (Sharon Farrell).

**The High Window* in Britain.

Garner plays Marlowe as Maverick, the cowardly gambler hero he created on TV in the 1950s. Marlowe drinks, fights, hustles and wisecracks, but everything is undercut by the shifty eyes. Here is a Marlowe without inner strength, yet one who hopes to survive honestly. Garner resembles Dick Powell's boyish Marlowe and provides the link between the forties Marlowe and Elliott Gould's Marlowe for the seventies. Reality is always on the verge of overcoming Powell and Garner and finally triumphs in the case of Gould. Life in California is still sordid, still amoral; and a man who tries to live by principles is doomed to eternal hustle and the marginal life. The only difference between him and the amoral and immoral characters around him is that he adheres to a code, a code which provides only a thin line separating him from their world.

But that code is real. It says that Duty, Honour, Friendship and Loyalty still mean something. Leigh Brackett's script, Elliott Gould's acting, and Robert Altman's direction in *The Long Goodbye* insist on the opposite. Chandler's novel about the importance of friendship, about human loyalties being more trustworthy than legal ones, has been changed to an insistent cry that even friends are not to be trusted. Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* is concerned with Marlowe's strange friendship with Terry Lennox, whom he helps flee to Mexico. Marlowe goes to jail rather than betray this friend whom he hardly knows. Lennox is believed to be a murderer and a suicide. Marlowe remains loyal, but at the end of the novel he sees that the difference between himself and Terry is that Terry is a 'moral defeatist', unable to make moral distinctions. Marlowe dissociates himself from Lennox by refusing his money, but he still does not betray him because he is innocent. In the film all this is simplified so that Lennox becomes a murderer and a manipulator. He uses Marlowe. 'What else are friends for?' he smiles, just before Marlowe shoots him at the end of the film. And that is the act that enrages Marlowe fans. Marlowe's transition from bumbling incompetent to judge and executioner is the key act of the film, the part Altman clung to when pressed to make the film more palatable for American audiences.

Altman opens his film with a disarmingly gentle parody of the lonely life of the private eye. Marlowe is awakened by his hungry cat at three in the morning. He discovers that he has used the last of the cat's favourite brand; so he mixes an expensive concoction of egg and cottage cheese which the cat refuses. He thus is forced to visit one of the new night places added since the 1940s, the all-night supermarket. Searching helplessly for the favourite brand amidst a brightly coloured, never-ending row of cat food cans, he appeals to a black stock clerk for help. The clerk replies, 'They're all the same, what's the difference?' With a triumphant smirk, Marlowe mutters, 'You don't have a cat, do you?' Clerk's smug reply: 'What do I need a cat for? I got a woman.' Zap! Marlowe starts his latest movie two down and never catches up. He goes further down when the cat rejects his desperate ploy of putting non-desirable food in an empty tin of the proper brand name.

Marlowe then helps Terry Lennox escape to Mexico. The police arrive and Gould/Marlowe does a boyish parody of the whole tough cop/tough private eye routine from a hundred movies. At this point the film still maintains a tone of affectionate parody similar to the Albert Finney vehicle *Gumshoe*. Unfortunately, when Marlowe begins to investigate the murder that his friend Lennox supposedly committed, the film begins to fall apart. The parody stops, and the attack begins.

Some of Altman's best inventions have always been on the fringes of his films: the throwaway dialogue in *McCabe*, the PA system in *M*A*S*H*, the small moments in *Brewster McCloud* and the décor in *Images*. In *The Long Goodbye*, the satiric elements still function well away from Marlowe. The nubile, nude candle-makers in the next-door apartment; the star-crazy guard at the expensive enclave of the rich; David Carradine as the slogan-spouting hippie sharing a cell with Marlowe; the crazy people wandering around in the sanatorium, and the submerged animosity in the black/white detective team all give the film insight and wit at the edges. More inventively and accurately than either *Marlowe* or *Harper*, *The Long Goodbye* builds a humorous and detailed portrait of the contemporary Southern California life style. Altman's purpose is to show how Philip Marlowe, with his 1948 Lincoln Continental and 1940s style, does not fit.

Like the weak males from the *film noir*, Marlowe succumbs to the manipulations of a beautiful and designing woman, Mrs. Roger Wade (Nina van Pallandt). He pantomimes the usual efforts of the private eye, but is actually totally bewildered by the events confronting him. (A muttered 'I don't know, but it's O.K. with me' becomes his identifying tag.) By this time, Altman has lost his original figure of parody and satire. Elliott Gould no longer resembles in any direct way the continuing line of Marlowe

interpretations: he is too bewildered, too manipulated, too misled. And that is perhaps the fatal mistake in the film. Gould's Marlowe never acts, only reacts—until the final shocking moment when he kills Terry Lennox and skips down the road playing a harmonica and dancing to the tune of 'Hooray for Hollywood'. To satirise Marlowe effectively, the character must be in more assumed control of the action.

Much of Altman's best work in the film is damaged by his relentlessly ridiculous Marlowe lumbering around at the centre of things. In addition to the bits already mentioned, there is Sterling Hayden as Roger Wade, the weak husband destroyed by a calculating wife, Henry Gibson as the sinister psychiatrist and Mark Rydell as a harried gangland leader who spouts faddish psychology jargon with the usual California ease. The moments of violence in the film explode with a shocking fierceness: Altman has beautifully set his audience up, and then makes them pay the consequences almost as effectively as Peckinpah himself. All the locations from the old films appear, but Marlowe's vacuous stare hurts the intended parodies. No one could be so out of touch. He lacks even the naïve confidence that carries *McCabe* through so much of his movie, and Altman's criticism of the Western hero is far more successful, because fuller, than his criticism of the private eye.

While it is valid to question Marlowe's position in a world that seems devoid of meaning, Altman fails to do so honestly. He too readily condemns a hero that he fails to understand; he changes the game and loads things against Marlowe to the point where one feels an unintended sympathy for him. Although Marlowe may well look as ludicrous as the knight of La Mancha, the need and the longing remain. The world grows increasingly difficult and even more corrupt, but Marlowe will survive as he has for thirty years. ■

'The Long Goodbye': Nina van Pallandt, Elliott Gould



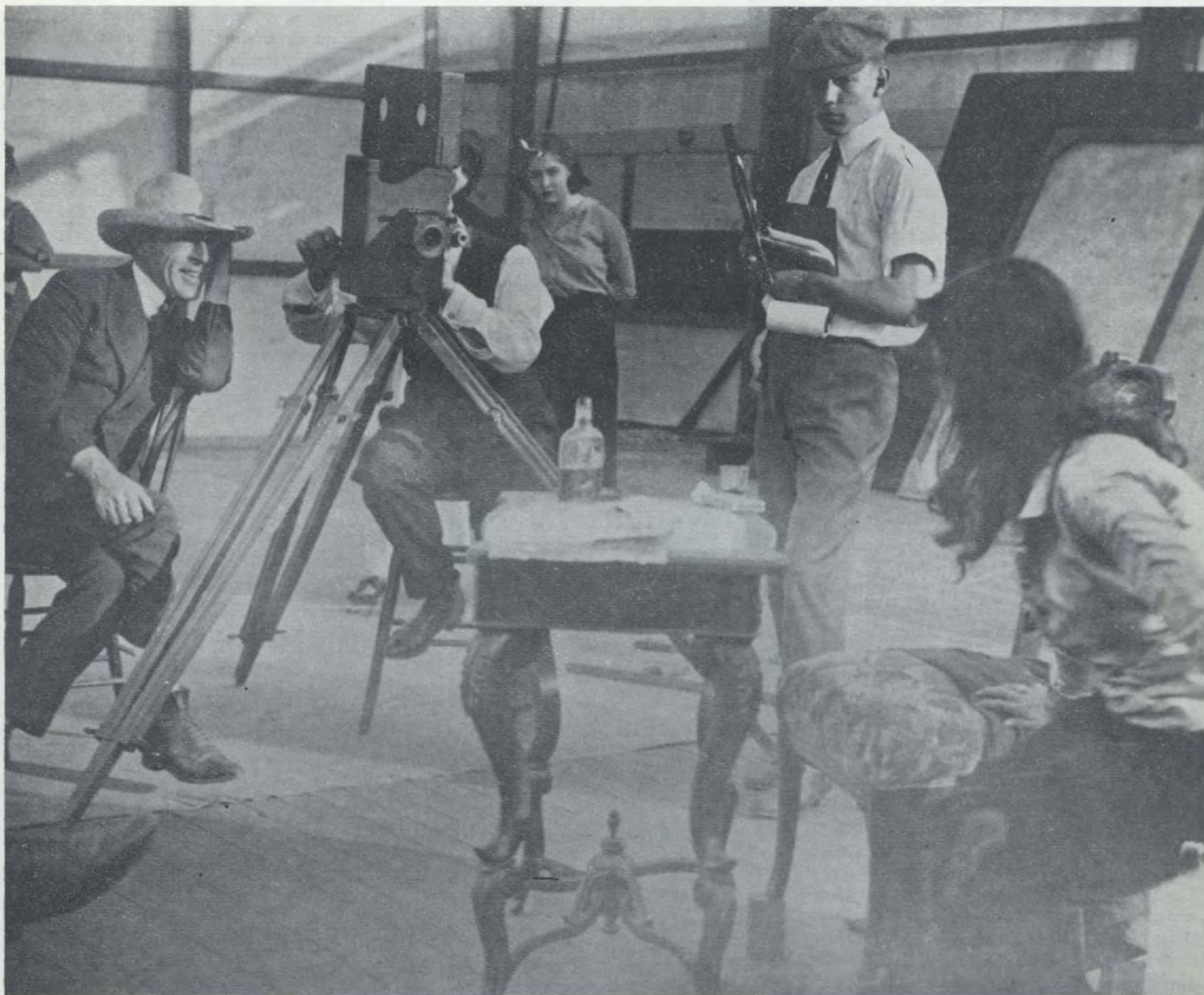
Karl Brown joined the Griffith troupe in 1913, as assistant to the great cameraman Billy Bitzer. Brown was then sixteen. He stayed with Griffith until the time of *Broken Blossoms*, went on to join Famous Players-Lasky and to photograph *The Covered Wagon* for James Cruze, and in 1926 turned director with *Stark Love*, a feature shot entirely in the primitive mountain country of North Carolina.

Kevin Brownlow's enthusiasm for *Stark Love*, a 'lost' film in America but preserved in the Czech Film Archive, sent him on the trail of its maker; and Brown, now in his seventies, was finally found to be living in North Hollywood, enjoying what he described as 'obscurity on a comfortable income'. He was persuaded to write his memoirs, *Adventures with D. W. Griffith*, to be published later this year in America by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 'I am keeping away from all cinema research,' he told Kevin Brownlow, 'for the simple reason that I want to keep my memory "pure", if that makes sense. I cannot permit this book to be a pastiche of carefully rewritten quotes.' The result, as Brownlow emphasises in his introduction, is extraordinarily direct and vivid, an eye-witness account sixty years after the fact. The following chapter, which has been somewhat condensed for publication here, takes Karl Brown from his early days on the Griffith lot to the first intimations of *Birth of a Nation*.

THE GREAT D.W.

Karl Brown

D. W. Griffith, Dorothy Gish, Karl Brown, Miriam Cooper. Shooting 'The Mother and the Law' (1915), later the modern story for 'Intolerance'



BITZER HAD BEEN absolutely correct in his statement that all he required of an assistant was a strong back and a weak mind. The work was not only physically heavy; it was so diverse that it would take at least three competent workers to do it properly.

Consider this as a daily stint. Arrive an hour before shooting is to begin. Load magazines. Carry all equipment to the first set-up. Camera, tripod, magazine cases, accessory case, still camera, still tripod, case of plates and accessory equipment. Have side-line stick handy, with chalk, chalk-line, hammer and roofing nails. Have notebook ready, with extra pencils. Be sure to have the white sheet ready for instant use. Load camera, making doubly sure that the upper and lower loops are exactly right. Check ground glass. Clean with alcohol to be sure there's no trace of oil which would make it deceptively transparent. Check pressure pad, a satin covered oblong of brass that held the film flat against the aperture. Check aperture plate for any trace of roughness. Have tests of previous day's work ready and marked by number in their own film can. Check focus of the low-power microscope Bitzer used to balance depth of field of each scene. Be sure the hand magnifier is clean and polished. Wash and dry slate—the common, wood-framed slate used by schoolchildren

of that day. Be sure there's plenty of chalk.

The company arrives. The cast in costume, Griffith groomed and tailored to perfection, as always. Apparently vain of his appearance, a hold-over from his acting days. He tells Bitzer the set-up. Bitzer moves camera to proper position and begins to light the scene. A diffuser pulled back here, another run forward there. White flats angled to catch the sunlight and throw it in from one side of the set. During this, Griffith has taken off his coat and has begun to shadow-box, weaving and bobbing and ducking, dancing forward and back, darting his fist like a rapier as he charges forward at his invisible opponent, his face aglow with the joy of combat. He becomes savage, a killer, throwing whistling rights and deadly left hooks while ducking and blocking a barrage of blows from the Invisible Man.

These one-man exhibition matches startled and fascinated me just at first. I'd have liked nothing better than to have taken a ringside seat to watch them through in comfort, but I was never given the time because lines had to be put down.

This business of putting down the lines was a standard preliminary to the shooting of every scene. I'd take a white stick, about an inch square in diameter and six feet long. I'd hold it up by thumb and forefinger, grasping it lightly at the upper end to let it hang in a true perpendicular. I'd move to where the forward edge of the set ended and then, following Bitzer's hand motions as he looked into the camera, move the stick until it was lined up exactly with the side of the frame as seen in the camera. A downward motion of Bitzer's hand. I'd let the stick slide through my grasp until it touched the stage. Then I'd bend over and mark the spot where the stick rested with a piece of ordinary school-blackboard chalk.

The next step was to move the stick forward until Bitzer's hand motions indicated that the bottom of the stick was exactly on the bottom of the camera frame-line. Then out, out, out, until the stick rested on the bottom corner of the frame-line. Mark. Cross to the other side. Find the other corner. Mark. Then back to the other edge of the set. Find it and mark.

Next, drive a broad-headed nail into each mark. Then stretch strong white cord from nail to nail, beginning at the back, progressing to the front and across, and then back to the nail at the other edge of the set. Tie off. Now everyone knew exactly the stage area covered by the camera, which was not only never to be moved, but which was sometimes even anchored to the floor with strong lash-line secured by a stage-screw. Actors could then walk carelessly down toward the camera, secure in the knowledge that as long as they stayed inside that white cord their feet would not be cut off and audiences would not wonder how people could walk around without feet. They could move from side to side freely so long as they stayed within the lines. This was especially valued by stage-trained actors who were used to working in a clearly defined area; without these guidelines they were constantly moving outside camera range to deliver their most telling effects. Griffith and his lines removed all that danger. It was considered to be a notable advance in the art of picture-making.*

All was ready. Griffith abandoned his

athletics to take his seat beside the camera in an ordinary kitchen chair. A rehearsal was run through, more of positions than anything else, because they had already been rehearsed and they knew the mood and timing of every scene. Shooting was merely a matter of committing to film what had already been worked out in rehearsal. I'd have dearly loved to enjoy the scene, but there was too much to be done. Get rid of the stick and chalk, hammer and nails. Pick up the book, a pad of ruled and columned sheets in which all scenes were to be recorded.

Since there was no script, the scene numbers were registered in consecutive order of shooting. A scene shot six different times would carry six different numbers. These numbers were chalked on the slate and held before the camera to be photographed on the film. To erase an existing chalked number with a dry rag and to



Karl Brown: a snapshot from the time when he joined the Griffith unit

replace it with a clearly legible succeeding number called for hard scrubbing and firm marking, so very firm as to break the chalk until you learned to hold the crayon close to the tip so as to eliminate leverage. Drop chalk and slate and grab book and pencil. Note bare mechanics of action. A typical entry: 'MM ER MRH PS RHXR 35 4.5'. Anyone connected with the picture could tell at a glance that the entry meant that Mae Marsh enters from right, meets Robert Harron, plays scene, Robert Harron exits to right, and that the scene ran thirty-five feet and was shot at f.4.5.

And so the day would go, scene after scene. The simple notation, PS, Plays Scene, could apply to one or two or a roomful of characters. There was no hope of describing just how the scene was played because of six takes, no two would be played the same way. Griffith's method of staging was similar to that of a composer writing a theme with variations. The theme was always the same, the variations as many as Griffith could think of at the time. There was no such thing as printing one selected take. Everything was printed. The final selection was made in the projection room, and the final assembly might very well be made up of bits and pieces of three or four out of six or eight takes.

The break for lunch meant dismantling and stowing everything away out of sight. Reason: there might be snoops from the Trust prowling around to see what they could see. And photograph. One clear

*This is *not* one of the innovations for which Griffith claimed much credit.

picture of a Pathé camera on a Griffith stage would be enough to offer in evidence to secure a cease and desist order, or even a warrant for seizure of the physical evidence. And besides, the Trust had it in for Griffith with a vengeance. He had been the bright particular star of Biograph, one of the principal members of the Trust organisation. He had walked out on them to form his own independent company.

Lunch itself was a matter of personal convenience. It was no trick at all for me to trot home and find a hot lunch waiting. Most of the working crew brought their own lunches in old-fashioned bright tin dinner-buckets. Griffith ate in his office from a hamper prepared by the Alexandria hotel, where he lived. There was a small hotel on Fountain Avenue, nearby, where many of our cast lunched regularly.

The day ended when the light became yellow. The cast was given the call for the next day and dismissed. Griffith would go to his office. My job was to lock all equipment securely away, go home to dinner, and then return for the rest of my day's work. All the exposed film of the day had to be 'wound out'. This meant going into the dark-room with the exposed magazines, dousing the light, and then opening any magazine at random, placing the roll on the spindle of one rewind and then running it carefully on to a second rewind, feeling the edges very carefully for notches. Bitzer notched the film between every set-up, and sometimes between every scene if it involved a change of lighting. Bitzer made these notches with scissors, the big sissy! Couldn't even tear film. It was the only thing I could do that he could not, and I prized my poor little single advantage accordingly.

The film was broken at each notch. I tore off a five-foot length for testing, numbered it *one*, and placed it to one side. This test was marked with a figure 1, using a wax pencil. The length of film was placed in its own separate can and secured as a tight roll with an elastic band. And so on through the entire day's work, a test-strip to each take and a separate can for each roll, however short. By this time the pieces had been all canned and sealed with adhesive tape. The test strips were still in the open. The last step was to tear a small strip of eight inches or so from the test strips and mark them with corresponding numbers. These were pinned together, as were the longer strips. The short pieces were to be developed then and there, for Bitzer's examination in the morning. The longer lengths were to be canned and marked 'Tests' for Abe Scholtz, our negative developer.

Abe Scholtz. An endlessly fascinating and vaguely repulsive character, not for what he was but for what he had been, through no fault of his own. Abe Scholtz was a pale, bloodless skeleton of a man who had lived through more horrors than I cared to hear about. His companion and sharer of these horrors was Joe Aller, a bright little cricket of a man who seemingly had never had a care in the world. Both were Russian Jews who had lived in Czarist Russia. I happened to hear them talking about certain indignities to which Russian Jews had been subjected in those most evil of old days, things such as having sulphuric acid poured into their ears, and I got away quickly before I could hear any more.

If genius be an infinite capacity for taking pains, then Abe Scholtz was unquestionably a genius. He would develop these test strips himself, by hand, watching and remembering the first flashing of each image on each strip. This time of appearance meant much to him, how much I was never expert enough to know. Once developed, fixed and washed, these strips would be placed on the familiar old light-box where a lamp of known intensity would shine through these strips against the even illumination of a sheet of opal glass which was kept meticulously clean. These he would study with all the concentration of a master of chess deciding a crucial move. No snap judgment of anything, no surrendering of the film to less expert hands. He developed every foot of every scene Griffith ever shot. He would change the developer from strong to weak, from fresh to old, to whatever he felt—not knew, but felt—to be the one particular treatment for any given scene. If twenty different scenes required twenty different developers, he would treat those scenes twenty different ways if it took all day long and into the night. And if, by any possible chance, the result fell short of his concept of what a perfect negative should be, then he'd attack the problem afresh, with reducers or intensifiers, to finish with twenty negatives of exactly the same ideal quality, all twenty of which could be printed at the same printing-light reading.

Bitzer used to complain, 'Damn it, Abe's developing these negatives thinner and thinner every day.' Well, they *were* thin; this to the point of ghostliness according to my Kinemacolor training. But thin as they were, everything was there; and Joe Aller, only a degree or two less on the scale of genius, knew exactly what to do with these negatives. He used the standard metol-hydroquinone-sodas, but with a difference which consisted mostly of heavy on the hydroquinone, don't forget the metabisulphate and administer the bromide with the delicate judgment of a pharmacist turned doctor of medicine.

The result, on the screen, made Bitzer the greatest cameraman in the world, the king of them all. This is to take nothing from Bitzer. For in all truth, the best even the most inspired of cameramen can do is to put a latent image on the raw film stock. Bitzer was great in the sense that a great designer or architect can produce great plans. But Scholtz and Aller brought his plans into physical, lasting being. Probably this has always been true. We admire the Parthenon without so much as a fleeting thought of the slaves who worked all that marble into being, and we philosophise about the Sphinx without realising that this was once a shapeless mass of age-defying stone of surpassing hardness that workmen wrought into a heroic symbol of eternal mystery with no tools but copper chisels and no encouragement but a slave-driver's whip.

The same principle was holding true of us. One man, who was the master designer, Griffith, drew all the plans. The rest of us, from the highest to the lowest, gave whatever was in us to the realisation of the master plan. I was the lowest, a beast of burden by day and a chore-boy by night. The work was cruelly hard, the hours exhaustingly long.

But my little stint of daily duty was as

nothing compared with the working hours Griffith himself spent out of each of the twenty-four. I had no way of knowing how much of his time and energy was absorbed by meetings concerned with costs, expansion, hiring, firing, contracts, deals, profits and losses, matters which only he could decide because it was his studio, his fortune, his future; and although others might advise, only he could make the final decisions. What I did know was that he was on the set promptly to meet any call. He worked as long as the daylight held. He might go to the Alexandria for a dinner-conference, but he was always back in the studio and in the projection room with his two cutters, Jimmy and Rose Smith, to run film over and over and over again, altering, changing, trying this, trying that.

Late as some of my night chores might be, whenever I had finished and had locked up the camera room for the night, the projection room was always going. For the projection room was really Griffith's cutting room. Here he would sit, hour after hour, studying scenes he had run dozens of times before. They might be good. Very good indeed. But then again, there might be a way to make them even better, if only he could think of it. Over and over, endlessly over and over.

His highest objective, as nearly as I could grasp it, was to photograph thought. He could do it, too. I'd seen it. In *Judith of Bethulia* there was a scene in which Judith stands over the sleeping figure of Holofernes, sword in hand. She raises the sword, then falters. Pity and mercy have weakened her to a point of helpless irresolution. Her face softens to something that is almost love. Then she thinks, and as she thinks the screen is filled with the mangled bodies of those, her own people, slain by this same Holofernes. Then her face becomes filled with hate as she summons all her strength to bring that sword whistling down upon the neck of what is no longer a man, but a blood-reeking monster.

And then I would trudge on home past darkened houses where everyone was asleep, leaving the whirring projection room behind and the man within it, trying to drive his dreams into a corner where he could capture them and show them to the world.

Thanks to my inborn laziness, I found ways to make my work a little easier, day by day and by slow degrees. There were always men standing around doing nothing in particular—stagehands, carpenters, drivers and actors—and when it came time to move all those back-breaking cases from one place to another, the simple appeal, 'Aw, come on, fellows, gimme a hand, won't you?' brought instant response. Not that I put all the burden on these willing helpers. That would not be fair. So I was always careful to do my own full share by leading the way and showing them where to put everything. For some reason this delighted Griffith. Always in the habit of voicing his thoughts aloud and of addressing his remarks to nobody in particular, he said with an amused tone of dry comment, 'I see that our young colleague has acquired for himself a staff.'

My next labour-saving device was a line-stick armed with chalk at the bottom end. As soon as the side-line was found, a slight movement of the stick marked the spot where the nail was to be driven. This

brought another murmur from Griffith, 'Ah! It would appear that our youthful comrade-at-arms has distinguished himself not only by raising three whiskers and a pimple, but that he has also become something of an innovator.'

This didn't bother me. Griffith was forever voicing whatever thoughts happened to cross his mind. There was a time when one of our assistants, a goggle-eyed, wobbly-gaited, dim-witted idiot type, went weaving uncertainly across the stage. Griffith followed the unfortunate young man with his eyes, and then murmured in a voice of deepest compassion, 'Ah! Masturbation is a *dreadful* thing!'

There was one problem which bothered everyone, especially me. The slate. It is impossible to rub all the chalk from a slate with a dry rag or a dry anything. Washing was out of the question: too long to dry, and chalk will not bite into wet slate. Try as I would, there were always traces of previous numbers left on the slate, and after a few takes what was registered on the film was a sort of palimpsest of 3's and 8's over 5's and 2's, indistinguishable even to their maker—me.

I soon became tired of starting every day with someone yelling at me, 'Why the hell can't you make numbers a body can read?' So one night I worked late after my regular chores had been done, at a carpenter's workbench in the camera room. I cut a piece of plywood to form an oblong of nine by twelve inches. On this I fastened three open-faced pockets of tin, of just the right size to hold a playing card. I cut numbers from a wall calendar, 1 through 0, and cemented the numbers to the cards. By stacking them in proper order, 1 to 0, and by having a stack in each of the three pockets, the numbering problem simply disappeared. Lift the outermost card from the right-hand pocket and slip it in to the back and the next number in sequence automatically appeared. Every tenth time around, a card in the next column is moved, and for every hundredth, one in the third.*

It was a crude-looking contraption at best, but after I had persuaded Cash Shockey to paint it all black, with 'Griffith-Bitzer' lettered neatly across the top, together with the picture number, it was quite presentable. Not that I presented it. I simply put it to use the next morning without saying anything to anybody. When I held the slate in front of the camera, with the numbers, white on black, clearly legible, Bitzer was so taken aback that he forgot to turn the camera.

Griffith looked at the slate from his seat beside the camera. His face was expressionless. He held out his hand and made a beckoning motion with his forefinger. I meekly surrendered the slate to him. He held it, studied it, fingered the numbers to see how they worked, then returned it to me. Still without expression of approval or disapproval or anything else, he spoke in a reproachful undertone to Bitzer, 'Billy! Why couldn't you have thought of this years ago and saved us all that trouble?'

Bitzer had nothing to say. His dusky face grew darker and his chin quivered slightly. He didn't look at me or at Griffith or any-

*This device, greatly refined and improved, is still in use wherever pictures are made. Revealingly enough, it is still known as a 'slate'.



Rehearsal for 'Stark Love': Forrest James and Helen Mundy (left), Karl Brown in the director's chair

body. I did a little quivering myself, inside. This might very well be the end of the line for me, because there is no surer way for a junior to be shown the way to the door than by showing up the Boss—and in public, at that.

It was through this little episode that I came to know Sam Landers. Landers was a very strange man, physically and mentally. You've no doubt seen Toby jugs. Well, Landers had a face like those moulded into Toby jugs and mugs, very wide and very squat and very much overstated. His body was built to the same general specifications, squat but not fat, a squashed down giant. He never spoke unless spoken to, and his answers were all monosyllabic.

Sam Landers could do anything with anything mechanical. When the Trust threatened to drive all outsiders into extinction, Landers designed and built a camera that used no loop, no perforations, no shuttle, nothing that could infringe on anyone's patents because it operated on an entirely new principle. The film ran through as a continuously moving ribbon. The lens followed the aperture plate down during exposure, keeping in exact optical alignment. The shutter cut off the light at the downmost position and kept the film dark while the lens and aperture plate returned to the top to catch the flowing ribbon of film in time to open again for the next picture. It was noisy—it sounded like a machine gun—but it worked. It was called the Griffith-Bitzer

camera. Sam didn't mind. He knew who had designed and built it and that was enough.

Landers also designed and built a new type of laboratory for the processing of any quantity of film. And he designed and built a camera in which the film ran horizontally across the lens instead of vertically. This enabled him to cut an aperture plate one inch high and as wide as desired, an inch and a half or more, producing a wide-screen picture. Bitzer derided the whole idea. 'Only difference it makes is that instead of the picture jiggling up and down it now jiggles sideways.' Landers ignored the jibe. 'You just wait,' he said. 'The day's coming when all you'll see is wide screen and nothing else.'

I was on my way to the lab with some cans of film when Landers surprised me by actually speaking to me. 'Hear you're in bad with Bitzer,' he said, his words emerging from a very small slit of his mouth.

'Suppose so,' I agreed. I felt no great urge to enlarge upon the subject.

'Don't let it get you down,' he advised. 'D.W. loves it. Never happy unless everybody's jealous of everybody else. Bitzer hates my guts. Always has. Knows that if he lets down for a single second D.W. will run me in to take his place. Nobody here that can't be replaced. Nobody here that isn't itching to replace somebody. Plays one against the other, everybody against everybody else. Not satisfied with people who do the best they can. They've got to do better

than their best or he'll run in somebody else who can. If he has to re-shoot half a picture. So the more you show Bitzer up the better.'

'And get myself fired?'

'Who'll fire you? Bitzer? Not a chance. Oh, Bitzer would get rid of you in a second if he could, just as he'd get rid of me. But before Bitzer can fire anybody he's got to clear it with D.W., and you can see how much chance there is of him trying anything like *that*! So keep up the good work, kid. Sharpen up your needle and ram it in as deep and as hard and as often as you can and you'll live happily ever after.'

The strange thing about all this was that I liked Bitzer. Not because he was likeable, for he wasn't. He was a strict, demanding taskmaster in the Germanic tradition, because that was the tradition in which he had been reared. He never asked; he demanded. He never expressed approval; he expected the best and his mere acceptance of a duty well done was the highest praise he could bestow.

From various sources I had learned something of his background. As a mere youngster he had served his apprenticeship as a silversmith in the long-established firm of Gorham's, in New York. He had spent so many years engraving formal announcements on copper that his handwriting had become an elegant example of the engraver's art. His hastiest scrawl had the light and shade, the grace and elegance of a wedding invitation. He had also worked as a creative jeweller, a worker in precious metals who could start

with a blank piece of gold or silver, or even a gold or silver coin, and produce—well, anything that could be made of gold or silver. His hands, stubby-fingered and thick, moved with the swift certainty of a born artist. His working habits were as precisely ordered as the mechanisms he worked with.

Bitzer had spent at least the past fifteen years of his life competing with his one most unrelenting rival—himself. He had to be forever surpassing himself and this demanded discoveries and inventions of the most revolutionary kind. But to my mind Bitzer's greatest discoveries were not of a photographic but of a human kind. He discovered Abe Scholtz and Joe Aller and he may have discovered Sam Landers, the dour mechanical wizard who had changed the old hand-development system into a smooth, continuous production-line process by which the film never left the drums but were moved by power-belts from developer to short-stop to hypo to wash water to drying room, tended by bloused and bearded Russians who knew nothing of what they were doing, with everything controlled by one man, Joe Aller, who moved from drum to drum carrying a red-glassed inspection light powered by a long cord that trailed behind him, to look at this drumload and that, to speak a single word in Russian or merely to make a motion of his hand to cause the drum to lift itself, move to the short-stop, thence to the hypo, and thence to the wash-tank, always turning, never stopping, a continuous production-line of thousands of feet of film always and forever under the eye of just one man, and that man the top-ranking expert of film processing anywhere in the world.

Here was no faltering doubt of the future. Film was on its way to mass production for mass audiences. And the seer who had invested everything he had, but most of all himself, was the great D.W.

To me, at my time of life and with my theatrical background, Griffith was a puzzle to be solved, a challenge to the mind. I had known stage directors, dance directors, musical directors all my conscious life. These had fallen, to my mind, into three easy categories. There were the Teachers, who sat and expounded patiently all that was to be said, done or conveyed by indirection. According to my father, probably the best of this class was W. S. Gilbert, who, while rehearsing *Iolanthe*, admonished the chorus girls with, 'A little more virginity if you please, ladies.' Then there were the Showers, hams to the bone, who insisted upon getting up and acting out every part. And finally, there were the Tyrants, the loud, sarcastic, domineering slave-drivers who could never get through a rehearsal without going into hysterics at least once. There were of course sub-categories and line-crossing individual directors; but almost without exception, so far as my observation went, they were united in one fixed belief: that their way was the only way and that no other way would do.

Griffith fell into none of these convenient pigeon-holes. He did not teach or preach, he did not act things out, and strangest of all, he never knew what he wanted except in a broad general way. Obviously, if the scene called for a confrontation and a fight there had to be a confrontation and a fight. But just how the confrontation was to be played and the precise blow by blow management



Echoes of Griffith in 'His Dog', directed by Karl Brown in 1927, with Joseph Schildkraut



'The Covered Wagon': Brown was cameraman on the famous James Cruze Western

of the fight was always in question. His idea seemed to be that although he had a vivid mental picture of how that or any other scene should appear on the screen, he also realised that there were always physical checks and balances to be overcome if he were to only approximate the ideal of his imagination. Hence the rehearsals.

These rehearsals were managed in accordance with the tradition of the stage. A bare floor, plenty of kitchen chairs, the cast in street clothes ready for a first run-through. But in Griffith's case, everyone connected with the production was on hand with notebooks and sketch pads to determine the settings, the props, the costumes and everything else that went into the playing of the picture from first to last, long shots and close-ups, reverse shots and cross-shots, the works, the whole works, and nothing but the works.

Everything was played out fully with invisible props and invisible doors, windows, drapes or whatever. This was easy for the cast. They could simulate anything. But it

called for the closest possible attention by the stage crew, from his incredibly capable master carpenter, Frank ('Huck') Wortman, who could build anything Griffith could imagine, down through his equally capable prop man, Ralph DeLacey, to the lowliest of his second, third, fourth or fifth assistants who were really errand-boys, forever on the run.*

Griffith's direction of these rehearsals was strictly off-the-cuff improvisation to see what would work and what would not. He started with a central idea from which the story grew and took shape and came to life through his manipulation of these living characters. It was his way of writing, and a very fine way it was indeed. Instead of working with pen or pencil, or through the mind and artistry of a professional writer, however skilled, he sculptured his thoughts in living flesh, to see and feel and sense what could be achieved and what could not, and to know in advance which scenes would 'play' and which would not. A simple scene, apparently meaningless in itself, possibly a mere 'bridge' to carry the story from one phase to another, would be tried two, three, five or a dozen different ways to settle at last into the one pattern which would work for everyone concerned.

These rehearsals were fully acted out to the minutest details. Mae Marsh, rehearsing for a picture called *Apple Pie Mary*†, played much of the action in an old-fashioned country kitchen. Here she pared apples from a pan held in her lap. She cut her finger slightly and carried it instinctively to her mouth. Inspected the tiny cut carefully and dismissed it as nothing. Continued paring, becoming tensely eager as she managed to peel one whole apple with a single unbroken paring. She threw it over her shoulder, then inspected the coil of apple paring to see if it would spell the initial of the one she would some day marry. She mixed dough, rolled crust, fitted pans, held the pans to eye level for trimming with a knife. A pause for discussion. Should she crimp the edges with her thumbs, to make ripples, or with a fork, to make a fluted edge? Decision: thumbs. More like the pies mother used to make.

And so the pie would be made ready for the oven. Opens oven door, tests heat with hand. Too cool. Lifts stove-lid with an iron handle, looks at fire. Needs wood. Gets wood from wood-box at side of stove, forces it into stove. Stick a little too long. Has to wedge it in. Replaces lid, opens grate damper, opens stove-pipe damper. And with all of this conjured up out of empty air, so vividly that you could all but see the stove, the lid, the wood-box, the dampers.

She washed smudged hands at an old-fashioned indoor pump beside the sink. Fluffs her hair at a mirror, quite a small one because she has to stoop and bend to see the reflection. Picks up damp cloth to wipe the table where she has been working. Interruption from DeLacey. 'What do you want on that table, Mr. Griffith? Checkered

*Among these may be listed Joseph Henabery, Erich von Stroheim, Monte Blue, Edward Dillon, W. S. Van Dyke, Tod Browning, Elmer Clifton, and whoever else happened to be handy and not otherwise engaged. This is nothing against these gentlemen. Everyone has to start somewhere, and they couldn't have chosen a better school in which to learn their trade.

†The final film was *Home Sweet Home*.

tablecloth or oilcloth?' 'Oilcloth, of course. Didn't you just now see her wipe it?' Silent retreat by Mr. DeLacey while he resolves to be more observant in future.

Sometimes Bitzer would say, 'Mr. Griffith, with Miss Marsh crowded into a corner like that we won't be able to see her face.' Griffith never resented intelligent questions. 'Let's see, now,' he'd answer, musingly. 'If we see her face it will be Mae Marsh washing dishes. If we see only her back and arms, it will be every woman in the audience washing dishes. We'll play it with her back to the camera.'

Griffith's own dialect, if such it could be called, fascinated me. His was not the regional speech of Kentucky, which has a recognisable quality all of its own. It was more of a personal idiom. Lillian Gish was spoken of as Miss Geeesh, very long drawn out. A bomb was always a boom, and a girl was always a gell. In normal conversation his voice was low, slow-paced and assured, but at times when he was directing and needed a certain amount of overstatement in a scene, he would become histrionic, almost hammy in his utterances. Sometimes, when he was under the influence of whatever poet he had been reading, he would speak metrically, falling into an easy, natural, and most certainly unplanned blank verse.

He did not always shadow-box for his morning work-out. If Miss Gish were on the set, he would dance with her, not idly or prankishly but with the same earnestness of purpose that marked his boxing.

There was a dance tune that was sweeping the world, a French fox-trot called 'Très Moutarde'. He not only danced to this tune but he furnished his own music, singing the melody with short, sharp, clipped tones in perfect time. 'You must be a fox,' he instructed his lovely partner. 'Eyes sharp, darting!' And his eyes would become sharp and his eyes would be darting from side to side. And no wonder, for as of that instant he was a fox, with all a fox's wit and cunning.

At other times he would sing. No idle humming for him, but big, full-voiced tones that must have bounced from Mount Hollywood and set the neighbours to wondering what operatic star was rehearsing on the Griffith lot. And he could sing, too; really sing. Caruso was the big name in opera, but Griffith liked Ruffo better. So he became Ruffo, and sang as Ruffo would sing, with long, very long-held tones with all the power at his command. At other times he would challenge members of the working crew to a foot-race. His particular favourite in these races was a short, thickset, general handyman who had appeared from nowhere and who had stayed on for no special reason except that everybody liked him and he liked everybody. He was short, so he was called Shorty. His speech proclaimed him to be most unmistakably English of the London Dock variety (he had been a sailor who jumped ship in Los Angeles), so he was known only as Shorty English.

It was an unforgettable picture to see Griffith, his long legs stretched to the utmost in mighty strides, arms flailing for greater momentum, his coat billowing and trailing, his hair blowing because of a hat lost somewhere back along the way, his face aglow with joy as he tried his utmost to beat the bandy-legged little Shorty English, who ran

with his head down, his arms close to his sides, and with his terrier-like legs twinkling as he crossed the finish line in a dead heat with the master of the cinema world, the great David Wark Griffith.

A moment to blow and regain breath and then back to work, with a thrown-away remark to the world in general, 'A man must perspire once every day to keep in reasonably good health.' Not that he had to excuse his behaviour to anyone. It was more a reminder to himself, to do something, anything, to offset all those midnight hours of sitting, sitting, and always sitting in that projection room, sitting and watching and wondering how he could possibly make his very best a little better.

There were also tragic moods that had to be exorcised by impromptu declamations. One of his favourites, repeated over and over again against the hammering and background chatter of stagehands, was: 'See this garment that I wear? / It was knitted by the fingers of the dead. / The long and yellow fingers of the dead . . .' Nobody would pay the slightest attention to this. It was all part of working for Griffith.

A thing that kept preying on my mind was the black thought that I had arrived on the scene too late. I had been present through the making of a whole string of little pictures, not big ones. Things like the grim handling of the theme of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, where Henry Walthall was changed from a bright young lad into a horribly grotesque murdering monster by the effects of what was then smugly referred to as a social disease. He even showed a piece of film shot through a microscope showing the actual *Spirochaete pallida*, white corkscrews whirling and darting in some poor devil's blood-stream. I can still hear the horror in Griffith's voice as we watched this film in the projection room, saying, 'Gahhhd! Can you imagine having anything like *that* in your body?'

Home, Sweet Home was virtually a remake of *Pippa Passes*, only instead of having the voice of a gay young girl bring cheer and faith to despairing mankind, the music of 'Home, Sweet Home' changed the lives of a set of different characters, a sort of multiple story dominated by a single thematic idea.*

There were others, equally unimportant in my juvenile judgment. Oh, they were done to perfection, but they were little pictures, while what I wanted to see was how he handled crowds and mass action, as in *The Battle*, or *Judith*, or *Elderbrush Gulch*. Perhaps his day was over.

Then came the electrifying rumour that he was getting ready to do a really big one, a thing called *The Clansman*, from a novel by the Reverend Thomas Dixon. I caught the next car downtown and hurried to the library, which was located in the two top floors of Hamburger's department store, at Eighth and Broadway. I went straight to the fiction shelves and ran down the alphabet to the D's. And there it was. *The Clansman*. Dixon. I grabbed it before anyone else could beat me to it and took it home, reading the first few chapters on the car.

It wasn't much of a story. Terribly biased, utterly unfair, the usual diatribe of a fire-

eating Southerner, Reverend or no Reverend. For I knew that period and I knew it well. Grandfather Brown had served all through the Civil War with the 10th Massachusetts. He had been in every battle fought by the Army of the Potomac. Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg. I'd heard all about these battles from his own eye-witness account. I'd also heard about the aftermath, the horrors of the Reconstruction and the rapacity of the political scoundrels who masked their robberies with a cloak of patriotism, the universally despised Carpet-baggers.

I knew how earnestly people of my grandfather's class had tried to follow Lincoln's advice, 'Let us bind up the nation's wounds.' I also knew, from my own childhood travels in the South, how the Southerners kept tearing these wounds wide open again at every conversation, every meeting, every political rally. They were still fighting the Civil War, forty years after Appomattox. It was not so much the military defeat that hurt. It was the intense pain of their lacerated pride that rankled and burned and which could never be forgiven or forgotten.

I read the book entirely through that night in bed, and it was as bitter a hymn of hate as I had ever heard of. It was an old-fashioned hell-fire sermon, filled with lies, distortions and above all, the rankest kind of superstition. The finish just about did me in. The actual book has to be read to realise that a minister of the gospel could seriously pretend that such a thing could possibly be.

A horrible Negro has killed a flower of young womanhood. For bestial reasons, of course. The girl's body is found, her eyes wide open with the fixed, unseeing stare of death. Who could have done so foul a deed? Ah! They know how to find out, instantly. The eyes of the dead retain the image of the last thing seen at the moment of death. So they peer into the dead girl's eyes, and sure enough, there staring back at them from out of the poor innocent victim's eyes leers the bestial face of that damned black bastard everyone hated.

After which, the deluge. It was burn, slay, kill without mercy. Which our heroes proceed to do, riding by night and disguised, even to their horses, in all-concealing white so that nobody could ever know who they were, where they came from, or what they were by day. I put the book down, sick at heart. The plot not only turned on a long-outworn superstition about dead people's eyes, but it glorified cowardice. And to add sacrilege to cowardice they rode under the symbol of a burning cross.

Oh, dear . . . Now I *knew* I had come on the scene too late. For I knew Griffith's thoroughness, his dedication, his fanatic intensity of concentration on whatever subject he was handling . . . He would take every element of this book and make it a thousandfold more terrible than it could possibly be in print. And the result could not fail to be a complete and crushing disaster.

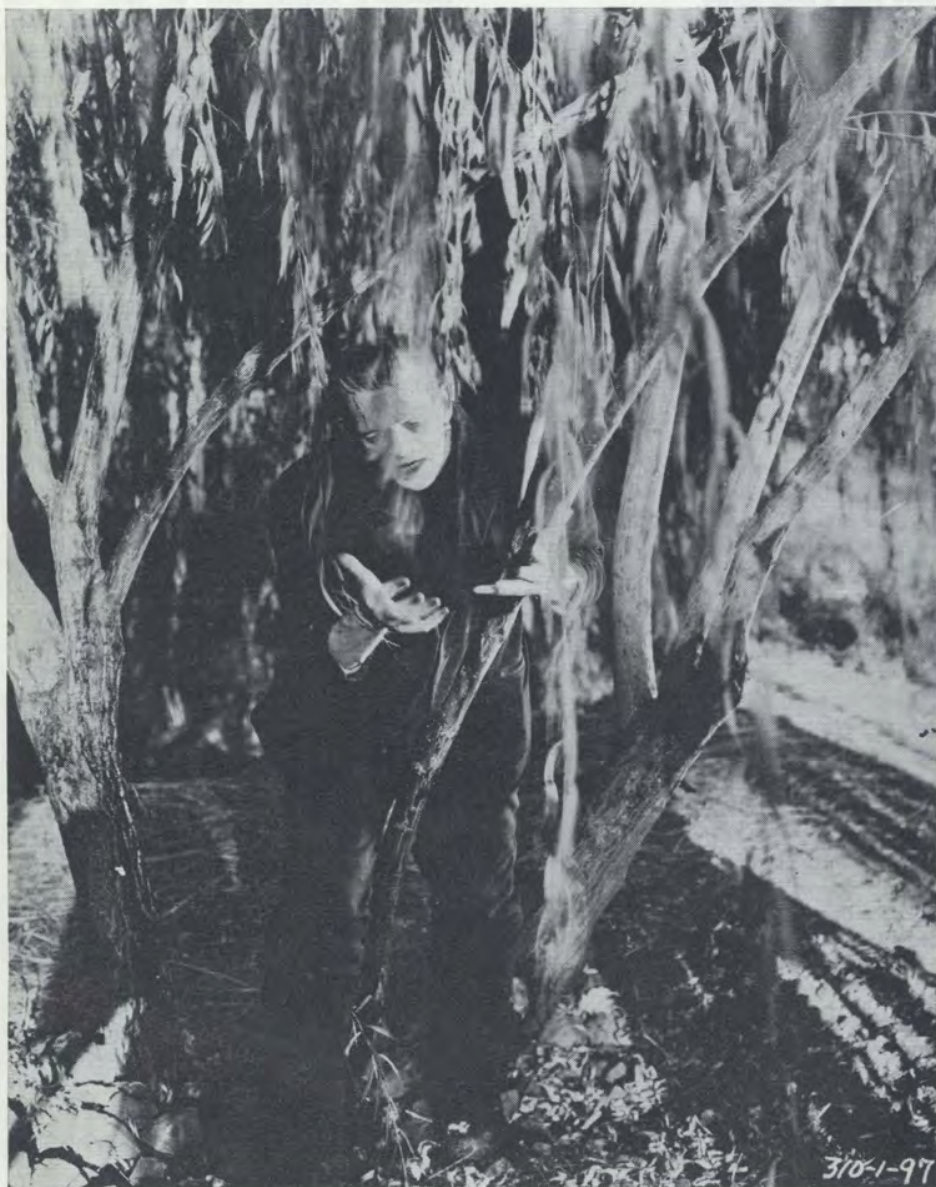
Yes . . . I had come too late to be part of his triumphs. All I could see in the future was the dubious privilege of being in at the death. I looked at the clock. It was four in the morning. I turned off the light and sought sleep, which soon came despite a heavy and an aching heart.

*This, unquestionably, must have been the trial balloon for the massive effort of *Intolerance*.

ONE MAN CRAZY:

JAMES WHALE

Tom Milne



Boris Karloff in 'Frankenstein'

James Whale, who died in the Gothic circumstances so dear to his own heroes—he was found after a mysterious fall into his swimming-pool one night in 1957—still remains something of an enigma. His name is revered in the history of horror movies for his work on *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Old Dark House* (1932), *The Invisible Man* (1933) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), yet the other seventeen films he directed seem to have entirely escaped the history books. Even the date of his birth, perhaps a tribute to his own vanity, has been wrongly recorded as 1896: he was born, in Dudley, Worcs., in 1889.* And when he went to Hollywood in 1929 on the crest of the enormous success of his stage production of *Journey's End*, the label of distinguished man of the English theatre which went with him became a permanent attachment.

Actually, the truth of Whale's theatrical background was rather more modest. Following a brief career as a cartoonist with *The Bystander*, Whale entered the theatre just after the First World War. He worked as stage designer and actor—attracting particular attention in eccentric roles like 'Twenty-two Misfortunes' in *The Cherry Orchard*—for various respectable but fringe companies like the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Lyric, Hammersmith. His handful of stage productions were mostly try-out affairs, and when he was finally entrusted with *Journey's End*, it seems to have been mainly because no established producer wanted to be involved with a play which everybody felt was certain to be a flop. Even then the production was a two performance try-out for the Stage Society, and it was only after endless hesitations, hassles and negotiations that *Journey's End* was staged in the West End and made theatrical history.

Yet one can see why the label stuck. Paul Jensen has pointed out how young Henry Frankenstein stages his animation of the monster in *Frankenstein* like a theatrical *mise en scène*, placing chairs for his three appalled spectators and delivering his own version of the *trois coups*, a demented cry of 'One man crazy, three very sane spectators,' before raising the lifeless corpse to the heavens on its miniature stage so that the electrical storm can ignite the spark of life. Throughout his work Whale is clearly delighted by eccentricity, by the essentially theatrical gesture, and his films abound with enchanting grotesques who are encouraged to take the plot by the scruff of the neck and make free of it to create a self-contained little farce of their own.

A typical example is the burgomaster in *The Road Back* (1937), a film which is in effect a sequel to *All Quiet on the Western Front* and entirely serious in its approach to the difficulties of readjustment faced by young war veterans returning to a Germany gripped by disillusionment, revolution and civil chaos. Worried by the situation, the townsfolk decide that the mayor must call a meeting immediately, and hurl stones at his window until a wizened face in a nightcap appears. Moments later, muttering crossly and mustering what dignity he can in topcoat, nightcap and long woolly muffler, a bizarre little gnome descends, takes his place at the head of the brass band procession, and is rudely nudged into a tottering advance by a prod from the big drum behind him. Slightly smoothed in his ruffled dignity by the addition to his costume of a top hat and official chain breathlessly rushed to him by his daughter, he takes his place on the rostrum in the town square, only to have Whale's camera cut away to observe his speech from the back of the crowd so that not a single word can be heard. 'Can you hear what he says?' asks an ex-soldier. 'No,' says a bystander, 'but he's telling us to behave quietly, to be patient.' And we are back with the disillusionment which will soon erupt in bloody civic riots.

Whale's theatricality, in other words, is almost Brechtian in its subtle distancing effects. Sitting back with cool detachment to enjoy his actors and their outrageous

*I am indebted for this information to Peter Barnsley.

coups de théâtre, he can still maintain the purity of emotion or meaning in a scene, and indeed enhances it by his intervention. The sophistication implied by this approach, and borne out by the quicksilver switches in tone and mood which are a hallmark of Whale's work, may perhaps help to explain why he disappeared so completely from view after a dozen years in Hollywood, about half of them as a top studio director and the other half in the slide area. After 1941 he devoted himself to painting, to the odd stage production and assorted unrealised projects, and one more film—*Hello Out There* in 1949—which was never released.

As a long-standing devotee of the two Frankenstein films, I became interested in Whale after seeing *One More River*, which suggested that there was more to him than had hitherto met many eyes. Since then I have contrived* to see all of Whale's twenty-one films except *Waterloo Bridge* (1931), *The Impatient Maiden* (1932) and *A Kiss Before the Mirror* (1933), and they proved to be an Ali Baba's cave of unexpected riches.

One More River (1934) was a surprise because it is a quiet, delicately tasteful study of a tenderly strangled romance between a married woman and a decent young man which never permits its deep undercurrent of emotion to overflow the banks raised by civilised concern to keep it in check. Superlatively directed by Whale, and literally adapted from the last novel in Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (which makes a forceful plea for a change in the divorce laws), it is a kind of *Brief Encounter* raised a couple of rungs in the social ladder. Two things in particular emerge from the film. One is the preoccupation with the quiddities of social behaviour, which may perhaps have sprung from Whale's snobbery and/or sense of inferiority (of humble origins, he eagerly scanned his family tree for signs of noble ancestry) but which paid handsome dividends in the acute and amused sense of observation which turned even the horror films into comedies of manners.



'The Old Dark House': Thesiger, Eva Moore, Laughton, Lilian Bond, Karloff

Unforgettable in *The Old Dark House*, for instance, is the way the waspishly effeminate Horace Fenn (Ernest Thesiger) politely presses his uninvited dinner-guests to 'Have a Pot-a-to?' as his sister proffers the soggy objects on a fork, or the way the same actor in the same film qualifies his offer of a drink with a defensive and supremely

decadent leer: 'It's only gin, you know, gin. I like gin!' Similarly, in *One More River*, the heroine's reluctant confession that she left her caddish husband because he used a whip on her is greeted by her father (the deliciously stiff-upper-lip Sir C. Aubrey Smith) with a gruffly incredulous bark of 'Oh! the bounder!' Amusingly quaint, but in the context by no means risible, as Whale very well knew, since it dovetails so exactly with the whole atmosphere of afternoon tea and strawberry summers, noblesse oblige and the proper thing, pride, privilege and Tory victories at the polls, which he has been at such pains to establish throughout the film.

The other thing evident from the film is the extraordinary skill and sensitivity with which Whale communicates the more undemonstrative niceties of emotion. There is a brilliant sequence in which the nice young man Tony (Frank Lawton) and the heroine (Diana Wynyard) are forced to spend the night by the roadside in his car because the headlights have broken down. Only too aware that he has already compromised her sufficiently, and by no means certain that she returns his love, Tony asks anxiously whether she trusts him ('Don't be silly,' she laughs), then keeps proud and protective watch as she leans her head on his shoulder and goes to sleep. In the morning, waking with the head and shoulder positions now reversed, he sadly murmurs, 'So it's over'. She looks at him quizzically. 'Was it so terrible?' she asks. And Tony, nervously smoothing his hair, doesn't answer. An unmistakable tang of passion smoulders beneath the bland surface of this sequence, and it is not until the final scenes that Whale lets it catch fire. Instead of cutting directly into the inevitable happy ending, after the court sequence which drags both of them through the mire but leaves them free to marry, Whale pauses for a brilliant caesura by having Tony come to see her but leave without proposing. The sight of her flat recalls an insinuation during the court proceedings, probably justified, that her husband visited her there one evening after she had left him and enjoyed marital relations with her. And suddenly all his hitherto unspecified and almost unrealised frustrations find a focus, and he leaves abruptly in a jealous rage.

Whale's ability to capture the unspoken with his camera was already apparent in his first film, *Journey's End* (1930). Overall, the film is competent rather than successful, partly because Whale respects the play too much, restricting the action to the single dugout set (apart from a fine chiaroscuro opening sequence of troops on the move under shellfire, and brief punctuating scenes in the trenches and in no man's land during a raid) with the result that the action is oddly diminished. In the theatre, for instance, the final curtain which falls after the shell demolishes the dugout, now empty except for Raleigh's body laid out on a bunk, seems to fall on a whole world in ruins; in the film, because the conventions are different and we must remain aware of a world beyond the tight confines of the proscenium (even though this world is not shown), the power of the ending is reduced to a small whimper beyond which life—and the war—simply continues. More particularly, the weakness of the film can be attributed to some disastrous



'Journey's End'

tampering with the text. Throughout, the speeches have been pruned in the interests of length, carefully and apparently innocuously, but with the result that the meticulously built-up tension between the fear of experience on the one hand and the bravado of innocence on the other, with the nostalgia of hero worship curiously acting as go-between, is frittered away for much of the time into an exchange of banalities.

Nevertheless there are two moments of uncanny illumination which entirely escaped the admirable and deservedly successful stage revival directed by Eric Thompson in London last year. One is the moment when the cowardly Hibbert, having failed to persuade Stanhope to send him down the line, meekly obeys the latter's order to go and get some rest, but returns almost immediately to ask for a candle; on the stage, simply because he cannot see, but in the film a hint of the nightmarish dark at the top of the stairs lurks behind the request. The second comes when one of the officers enviously observes that nothing seems to bother the plump and phlegmatic Trotter, and Whale's camera discovers in Trotter's cheerful assent a *je ne sais quoi* of hesitation which gives the lie to his air of imperturbability.

One would find it hard to guess, however, that *Journey's End* had been directed by Whale, since it is unique among his films in allowing no play for his delight in extravagance. The humour, provided mainly by a Cockney batman's lugubrious comments about the food he is serving, is damply conventional and much less funny than it was in Eric Thompson's stage production. The cast are limited in their performances to what passed then for heightened naturalism. And the cramped dugout set constricts his camera, later to make free of the high, vaulted ceilings and elegantly spacious sets in which his sparing but characteristic angled shots seem entirely natural. There is a stunning overhead shot in *The Road Back* when the camera calmly lifts from the crowd just turning into a mob to reveal the soldiers with a machine-gun waiting for them just around the corner on the cathedral steps; and a superbly Hitchcockian moment in *Wives Under Suspicion* when the sadistic District Attorney emerges from his front door to enter his waiting car, and the camera lifts to the shadow of a clump of trees to announce the presence of another car also waiting, and to observe the assassin's manoeuvre. Even in *Hello Out There*, where he was equally limited by Saroyan's duologue and single set (and that set a cell), Whale escaped not only by canting the prison bars outwards to a totally unrealistic

*Thanks almost entirely to David Meeker, who unearthed prints with the patience, persistence and mysterious skill of a truffle-hound.

angle so that the cell becomes a bizarre, unsettling parallelogram of changing perspectives, but by using light expressionistically to pick the action out of surrounding pools of darkness, and by enclosing the whole thing within opening and closing images which reduce the cell, and its despairing cry for help which echoes into an unhearing world, to a tiny speck in the cosmos.

Whale may have felt that he had been trapped by his success in the horror genre, but there can be no doubt that these films liberated his cinematic personality while in no way inhibiting his unexpected tenderness. As Carlos Clarens has observed, 'The private lives of his monsters, the more prosaic side of his fiends plainly fascinate Whale.' On the one hand this means the Invisible Man bewailing the disadvantages of invisibility (he can't wear clothes, so suffers terribly from the cold; the food he eats isn't invisible, so he has to hide after meals),



'The Invisible Man'

or Dr. Praetorius daintily enquiring in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, 'Do you like gin? It's my only weakness.' On the other, it means a scene like the Monster's encounter with his first real victim, the child in *Frankenstein* who teaches him the delightful game of floating flowers in the lake, and whom he innocently seizes as fresh ammunition when he runs out of flowers to cast into the water. A sequence, as Roy Edwards neatly put it, which 'seems as full of conceits as a metaphysical poem': the fall of Lucifer, the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

If I had to select an absolutely characteristic scene out of all Whale's work, it would probably be the sequence in *The Bride of Frankenstein* where the Monster, driven by vengeful hunters from his refuge and from the only person who never shrank from him in horror—the blind hermit who teaches him to speak, to love music, and to savour the meaning of the word friendship—takes refuge in a dank and dusty crypt. Seeing the body of a beautiful girl lying in a coffin, he advances: 'Friend?' he queries with heartrending hopefulness. A moment later he has to hide as Dr. Praetorius, arriving on a grave-robbing expedition, settles down to picnic on the coffin and reacts with impeccable *savoir faire* as the Monster emerges threateningly from the shadows. 'Oh, I thought I was alone,' he says, 'Good evening! Have a cigar? It's my only weakness.'

There is absolutely no sense of disruption in these lightning switches in mood, because the extremes of extravagance and simplicity are integral to Whale's vision. *Wives Under Suspicion* (1938), basically a romantic

comedy (it is a remake of *A Kiss Before the Mirror*), has peculiar overtones of horror, not only in the specially designed abacus with which the District Attorney keeps count of his triumphs (one skull equals one successful prosecution into the electric chair), but in the use of a recording of a wife-murderer's confession to make the D.A.'s neglected wife suddenly realise that her marriage is breaking down in precisely the same way as the murderer's. And *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1939), certainly the most stylish, spirited and elegantly phrased of all the versions of the Dumas tale, turns the mask itself—silvery, angular, hieratic—into an object of terror equalled only by Bava's *Mask of the Demon*. A fine, shadowy moment in the torture chamber where the bad twin supervises the fashioning of the mask with some ghoulis speculations as to how the victim's hair and beard will inexorably grow, is capped by the appalling realisation when he himself is trapped in the mask: 'I can feel them growing . . . they'll strangle me.'

Tenderness, mockery, the *frisson* of terror, the touch of alienation: the mixture makes for a peculiarly sophisticated formula, and in his best work Whale is astonishingly contemporary. *Remember Last Night?* (1935) indeed, might almost be a *nouvelle vague* film in its frenzied pace, its casual elisions, and the surrealist insouciance with which a wild party turns into a murder mystery and ultimately a mocking *canard*. The opening is pure Godard. There is a close-up of a kiss. The camera cuts back into medium shot, then swings left (drinks cabinet), right (the door), then left again. There is a knock at the door. 'Very good technique, Tony,' she says. 'We strive to please,' he says, looks off towards the door, whistles, and heads for the drinks. 'Rent?' she says of the envelope under the door. 'Let's ignore it,' he says. The letter, however, proves to be an invitation to cocktails, and the film whisks breathlessly off to a salon full of Greek statuary and swooping birds where an imperturbable butler (Arthur Treacher), with one of the birds perched on his shoulder, solemnly mixes cocktails from a bar in the form of a galleon and the guests embark on a dizzy celebration crammed with gags and somehow reminiscent of the wilder excesses of Feuillade's *Les Vampires*.

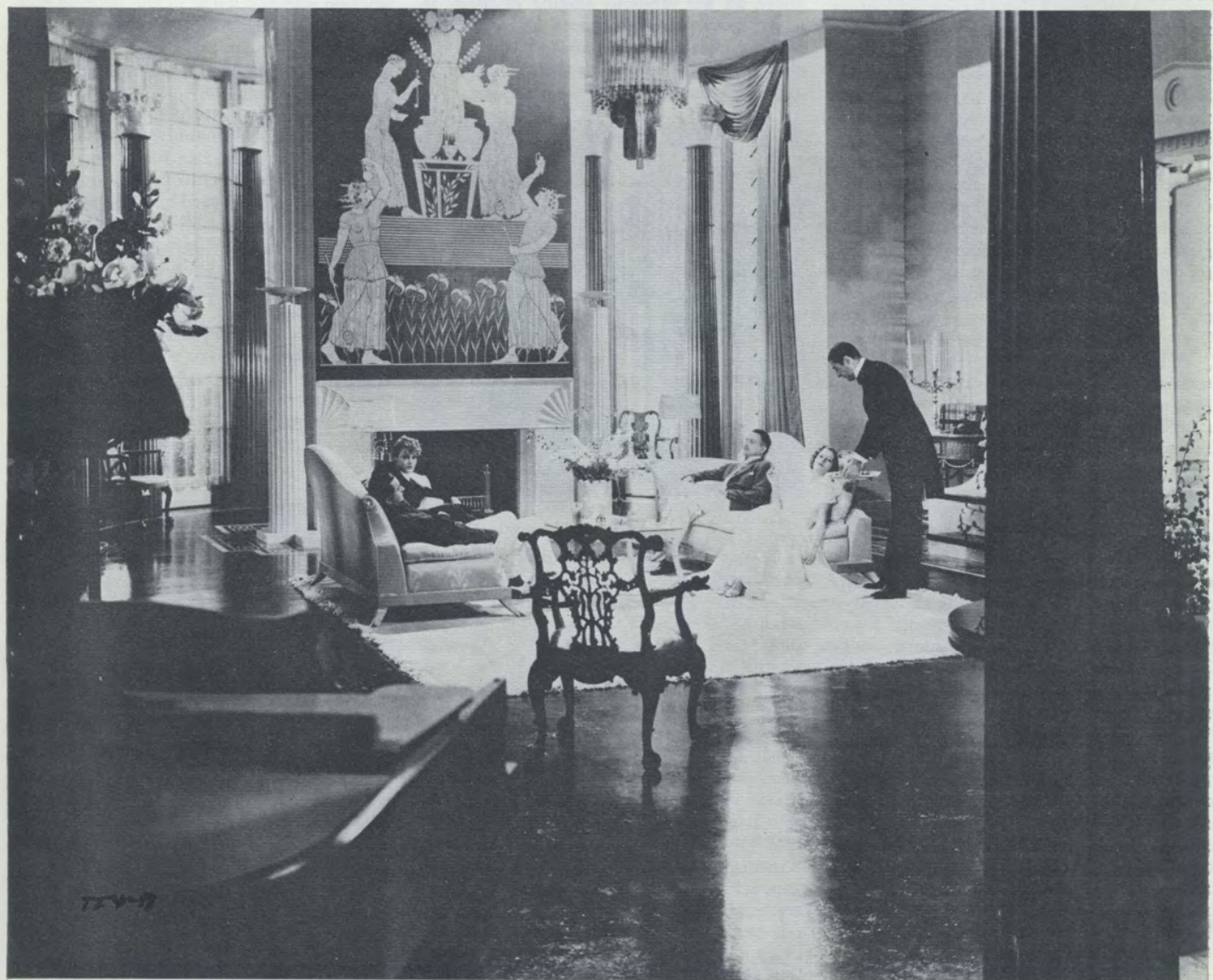
Morning brings the discovery of a body but no slackening in the cascade of jokes, both verbal and visual, as Carlotta and Tony (Constance Cummings and Robert Young, both delightful) borrow cubes from the ice-packs on their heads to mix the hair of the dog, momentarily falter as they discover the apparently lifeless body of another reveller ('Steady,' urges Tony, 'they can't all be dead'), and exchange affectionate exploratory barks when it is suddenly discovered that Carlotta is for some reason now sporting a dog-collar. Billy Wilder didn't quite bring off the machine-gun rattle of non-stop gags in *One, Two, Three*, but Whale does here with the help of some sparkling dialogue (by Doris Malloy, Harry Clork and Dan Totheroh), and the introduction of a stream of equally sparkling characters headed by the Holmesian District Attorney (Edward Arnold), his Brooklynese Dr. Watson (Edward Brophy), and a sinister hypnotist (Gustav von Seyffertitz)

who shows the way of things to come by using stroboscope psychedelics to liberate unconscious memories during his questioning of suspects. Memories, incidentally, which somehow dredge up from the alcoholic haze of the previous evening the image of Carlotta perched on a diving-board in a flowing white cloak, flapping her arms and crooning 'I'm Dracula's Daughter!'

By *Candlelight* (1933), in Lubitsch rather than screwball style, is equally brilliant. With the exception of *The Great Garrick*, this is probably the most consciously theatrical of all Whale's films, and he of course allows his hero (played by Paul Lukas) to stage his own *mise en scène*. In the opening sequence, Lukas, in a monogrammed smoking-jacket and comfortably installed on a sofa, sits sybaritically smoking, drinking and reading the memoirs of Casanova. Only when the telephone rings and he suavely listens to instructions from 'His Highness', does one realise that he is the butler, Josef. Rearranging the sofa, clearing his cigar smoke, titivating the flowers, he finally picks up his drinks tray and departs for the kitchen, leaving the door open so that we, still in the living-room and watching from the wings as it were, see him continue with his scene-dressing for the performance to come. The device is repeated with strict formality as the camera cuts into the bedroom, then waits while Josef sets out the champagne in the living-room before coming through the open door to stage-manage the bedroom. Finally the Count returns with a lady friend (Nils Asther and Esther Ralston), and Josef rings up the curtain on his production by entering to serve the champagne. After allowing the plot to get suitably under way, he then acts as his own *deus-ex-machina* by pulling out the electric light fuse, re-enters to furnish a delicately flickering candelabra, and sits back to let romance have its way with the lady.

The dénouement, with the cast ingeniously ad-libbing their way out of disaster when the wronged husband unexpectedly barges into the plot, is marvellously funny. But Whale gives his Chinese-box mechanism another secret compartment by having the Count, congratulating his faithful servant on his efforts, suddenly wonder about affairs on the other side of the tracks. 'They are not like yours,' says Josef mournfully. 'Cooks, parlourmaids, perhaps a governess at Christmas time. They don't appreciate finesse.' A strategic retreat to Monte Carlo, however, intended to place the Count out of reach of importuning mistresses and angry husbands, allows Josef to put his own qualities as a leading man to the test. He meets an elegant lady (Elissa Landi) who is labouring under the impression that he is of the nobility, and deliriously embarks on a high-toned romance, happily unaware that she is in fact a lady's maid. Quite without malice, and again with superb performances from his entire cast and a crackling display of wit, Whale proceeds to put the turn of the screw on his comedy of manners. There is a superb moment when Elissa Landi makes a regal entrance to a supposedly illicit assignation, blissfully unaware that her roguish small talk ('What must you think of me?') hardly matches the elegant plumes borrowed from her mistress, or that Josef, with the habit

*'The Road Back' (shot on the
'All Quiet on the Western
Front' sets); below: 'Remember
Last Night?'*



bred of a lifetime, is absently shaking out her furs as he takes them from her and folding them neatly over a chair.



'The Great Garrick'

With *The Great Garrick* (1937), Whale finally visited the *coulisses* for a delightful in-joke embroidered from the fact of Garrick's visit to the Comédie Française to act as guest star. The performance of *Hamlet* with which the film begins, maliciously in period with Brian Aherne actor-managing away no end as Garrick, starts the film off on a level of green-room parody from which it subsequently never wavers, with the script (Ernest Vajda) cleverly piling theatrical gag upon theatrical gag at the expense of actorish sensibilities. The Comédie Française, mortally affronted because it is rumoured that Garrick is boasting of the lesson in acting he intends to give them, stage a plot by Beaumarchais (of course!) to take over an inn and frighten Garrick out of his wits by their sinister carryings-on: a fine excuse for the members of the company to prove their worth by impersonating duelling noblemen, eternal triangles and flirtatious maids, and for Luis Alberni to have a ball as a spear-carrier of many years weary standing who pleads, with convincing demonstrations, his ability to go mad. Then there is the miniature prompter (Etienne Girardot, the mayor from *The Road Back*), who once played Gravedigger to Garrick's *Hamlet* in Dundee ('We had real sand on the stage, you know, and we had to dig...') and who loyally sneaks under the theatre stage to eavesdrop on the plot, only to be rudely ejected like a pantomime demon by the stage trap.

Best of all is the double checkmate of the dénouement, whereby Garrick humiliates the French actors by revealing that he had divined their masquerade all along and kindly demonstrating how they *should* have played their roles, while he himself is humiliated to find that the girl with whom he has fallen in love but presumed to be acting a part, is absolutely genuine. 'He doesn't even recognise real emotion when he sees it,' the maestro chides himself sadly, 'Let me tell you that the great Garrick is a great fool.'

Curiously enough, and despite his obvious affinities with Mamoulian—the same eclectic choice of subjects, the same unfailing elegance and sense of style, and above all the same choreographic approach (compare the opening sequences of *By Candlelight* and *Remember Last Night*?, not to mention *Wives Under Suspicion*, with any Mamoulian film)—Whale was obviously unhappy with musicals. Perhaps the soppy sentimentality

of *Show Boat* (1936) defeated him; it is, at all events, a thing of shreds and patches, although the beginning is well worthy of Mamoulian. A shot of the river, negroes on the bank. One of them shouts 'There's the show boat!' and everyone comes running, an eager horse comes running, even a black sow suckling her piglets comes running. Suddenly, in a kaleidoscope of action filtering through the circus parade announcing the delights of the show boat, all the characters are introduced and the salient plot point (Jake's impending denunciation of Julie as having coloured blood) is neatly made when Jake sees Julie's maid wearing the brooch he gave her and ominously destroys a poster with her portrait.

After that Whale's direction remains unfailingly stylish but somehow undistinguished. The cornball humour of the show boat entertainments is clearly not to his taste; Allan Jones is frankly awful; and Irene Dunne's singing of 'After the Ball' in her supposedly electric show-biz debut is such a comedown after Helen Morgan that the whole film is thrown out of joint. Only with Helen Morgan, in fact, does the film really ignite: her stunning exit down the aisle after the rehearsal in which she is denounced; the heart-stopping moment when, unseen in the shadows at the back of the rehearsal room, she blows a farewell kiss to Magnolia and disappears for ever; and above all her fabulous singing of 'Bill', in white dress, white feathered hat and black lacy boa, leaning against the piano with face and nervously gesturing hands vibrantly alive with the tragedy of the song.



'Show Boat': Helen Morgan

Too often towards the end of his career, perhaps as a punishment for so persistently attempting to fly above the heads of his studios, Whale was lumbered with increasingly unsympathetic subjects or appalling scripts with which he could do little. *Sinners in Paradise* (1938) churns out a conveyor-belt variant of the plot in which a carefully assorted plane-load of travellers crash on a desert island—the embittered hero is already there, awaiting the love of his life—and sort themselves conveniently into hearts of gold and feet of clay. *Green Hell* (1939), given a cast with possibilities (George Sanders, George Bancroft and Vincent Price in particular) and some crazily grandiose sets, might have worked out better as a jungle adventure with lost cities, poisoned arrows and buried treasure, but neither the script nor Joan Bennett as

the object of everybody's star-struck affections bears thinking about. *Port of Seven Seas* (1938) tries bravely to distil the *Fanny-Marius-César* trilogy into one short feature and fails, respectably, with an American cast battling against the Gallicisms. *They Dare Not Love* (1941), Whale's last film except for *Hello Out There*, is sadder because it proves that, given half a chance, he could still produce his best form.

The opening is again electric: a view of Vienna; the date, March 11, 1938; a superb montage of dark, glistening streets, scurrying feet, furtive hands exchanging guns. Then a mournful Austrian *Schloss* with Prince Kurt von Rotenberg, dwarfed by his ancestral splendours, being urged by two faithful old retainers to flee before it is too late. A sentimental leave-taking of the Café Wienergarten, with the Strauss waltz and the whirling dancers frozen on the floor by ominous cracklings from the radio, the brutal irruption of the Germans, and the headlong nocturnal flight to the frontier. It is difficult, unfortunately, to accept George Brent as an aristocratic figurehead behind whom all Austria will rally to defend liberty against the Nazi threat; even more difficult to accept the silly saga of heroics and self-sacrifice that ensues. There is nothing in all these melodramatics to match the extraordinary intensity of the moment in *Wives Under Suspicion* when Warren William stands outside in the pouring rain, watching his wife with the man he believes to be her lover, and the camera lifts in an exact reminiscence of an earlier wound when he was struck by an assassin's bullet. Nevertheless there are glimpses of the real Whale throughout, notably a bartender who prides himself on the fact that he can remember every detail of every one of his customers, but is floored by a couple playing a romantic game of make-believe and pretending they have only just met, and who leave him sadly contemplating the ruins of his professional pride.

Films like *The Great Garrick* and *The Man in the Iron Mask* give the lie anyway to the myth that Whale went into a decline. It is sad to think, as with Mamoulian, of all those years lost to the cinema. Cheering, on the other hand, to think of that exhilarating *oeuvre* which may one day be rescued from oblivion.



Whale directing 'The Bride ...'

That wasn't the end at all.
Imagine yourself surrounded
by the wreckage of the mill ...
Prologue to *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

For the Japanese film industry, the 1960s was a time of decline, and of considerable decline at that. Over a ten year period, the cinema audience dropped by three-quarters, and some of the big production companies which had monopolised the market were faced with bankruptcy. Meanwhile, there was a proliferation of small firms turning out cheap pornographic pictures, and an effort by the big companies to stay afloat by stepping up the dosage of sex and violence in their own productions.

But as the system of distribution and production began to break up, a new style of Japanese cinema was also emerging, launched by a handful of young directors. Their ambition was to effect changes in both form and content; but an essential part of their platform was that they wanted to bring about these changes while keeping firmly outside the traditional industry structures. Film-makers such as Shinsuke Ogawa set up independent, almost embryonic companies (*dokuritsu-pro*), publicly committed to the new left. And thanks to these young directors, Japanese cinema has entered in the last few years on a new phase.



Japanese Cinema: The New Left

Tadao Sato



After *Japanese Liberation Front—A Summer in Sanrizuka* came out in 1968, Ogawa moved full-time into the village of Sanrizuka, living with the local people and fighting with them to prevent the construction of a new international airport at Narita, outside Tokyo. This on-the-spot experience gave rise in turn to *Japanese Liberation Front—Sanrizuka* (1970), *Sanrizuka—The People at the Second Fortress* (made in 1971, and showing the airport construction firm calling in the police to clear barricades put up by the villagers), and to a third film still in preparation. This slow-moving, multi-part documentary, in which the stubbornness of the peasants and the character of their fight emerge through the progress of actual events, was conceived in circumstances which enabled Ogawa not only to achieve an unusually subtle understanding of rural Japan, but to approach its problems very directly. Obviously, what gives an otherwise straightforward documentary its special quality is this long-term absorption in the life of the community.

The same could be said about *Minamata*, Tsuchimoto's feature-length documentary, which to my mind was the best Japanese picture of 1971, and which has recently been shown in Britain. The film deals with an extremely serious case of pollution, the gradual poisoning of the people of Minamata by mercury compounds contained in the wastage from the neighbouring Chisso factory, and presents each stage of the struggle between the community (the fishermen and their families) and the factory bosses. Here again, a wealth of small details and a certain note of relaxed familiarity in the presentation help the spectator to tolerate an appalling reality: children incapable of walking properly, unable fully to co-ordinate their movements; adolescents slowly succumbing to longer and longer bouts of lethargy; mothers suffering from fits of convulsive shaking.

'What struck me at Minamata,' Tsuchimoto says, 'was the reticence of the victims when we tried to get them to talk. Almost all of them were fishermen and their families, and they seemed strangely ashamed and embarrassed at having been poisoned by their own catch. Of course, there are also a lot of local people working at the factory, but inevitably these people don't eat as much fish. I got the impression that the fishermen, who already thought of themselves as remaining outside the industrial process, were somehow ashamed of this strange sickness which had attacked them precisely because they *hadn't* changed their traditional way of life. And since they belong to relatively poor families, in which it's customary to keep the sick or the incapable at home, the idea of making a public protest simply didn't occur to them. By putting a microphone in front of them, we gave them the means of expression they needed.'

One thing that touched me deeply in *Minamata* was the modesty and restraint of the sufferers; their reluctance to let themselves go in front of a crew which had come an extremely long way to film them. It

Above: 'Japanese Liberation Front—A Summer in Sanrizuka'; below: Noriaki Hoshi's 'The Trenches—Continued'



Shareholders confront the company in 'Minamata'

seemed a very characteristic working-class sense of decency. But, I suggested to Tsuchimoto, this wasn't an aspect he had stressed greatly in his film.

'Obviously, it's always possible to look at the problem from another angle and to come up with the conclusion that there's something missing from my film. For instance, I didn't go into the question of the trade union group at the Chisso factory. This union took no part in the struggle against the pollution for which the factory was directly responsible. And the obvious question is whether workers can afford *not* to take part in struggles of this kind. One ought, no less obviously, to attack the weakness of a union which couldn't bring itself to play its part in the fight. But we already knew all about this weakness in advance. There's really not much more to be said about it!

'Even if you go and interview the factory workers in their own homes, you'll only get a lot of lukewarm answers. "I see what you're driving at here, but on that point I don't quite follow you..." That sort of thing. So in the film I left out all these relative issues and related questions in order to put myself, in the most radical way possible, in the situation of the most deprived group, the ones who inevitably are hit the hardest.'

Tsuchimoto follows a clear line: rather than try to analyse and interpret the significance of the fishermen's sufferings, it seemed to him more urgent to make people understand this suffering in personal terms. Objective critical analysis might have served the strategic purpose of convincing those who, like the trade unionists at Chisso, were playing the oppressors' game; but such analysis is less persuasive than the victims themselves, and the irreducible absolute of their suffering. For Tsuchimoto, the first priority must be to achieve solidarity through communion in suffering. And in this sense, *Minamata* is an eloquent testimony to the means used to achieve solidarity.

One rather striking scene confirms an impression that the victims' demands have gone beyond the merely rational and

reasonable. In order to get at the Chisso company on its home ground, the victims decided that they should each acquire a single symbolic share in the company and use their position as shareholders to pack the annual meeting. And so we see them holding discussions about this and coming into conflict with the lawyer assigned to their case, who considers the tactic ineffective and inopportune. ('You're going to spoil all my good work! If you'd waited a little longer, you could have got your compensation without any unpleasantness... Just calm down.') But for these people of Minamata, the issue has gone beyond mere cash compensation. What they want now, what to them is more important than money, is the chance to vent their indignation on the Chisso company in person, and to see its managing director humbled before them.

The documentary's substantial running time (2 hours 47 minutes in its original version), and what might be considered its many *longueurs*, are entirely the result of its carefully considered tactic. Tsuchimoto has opted, in preference to a 'finished' film, for an exhaustive presentation of the sufferers, cutting only those scenes in which militants or sympathisers appear.

In *Sanrizuka—The People at the Second Fortress*, Shinsuke Ogawa's camera is equally sympathetic to the material it is recording, and his film lays no claims to so-called 'documentary objectivity'. The film's final scene takes the spectator into the dug-out which the peasants have built to defend themselves against the forces of law and order sent to take over the site. A tour of the dug-out is a favour not granted to most journalists: the peasants show it only to people they regard as 'genuine sympathisers', as distinct from 'people who come to spy on us'.

Ogawa's crew were trusted. Getting up and going to bed at the same time as the peasants, doing their 'job' at the same time, exclusively engaged on films linked with this local struggle, they were treated as fully paid-up comrades in the battle, provided with full information, and given complete responsibility for deciding whether the filming of any incident was politically tactical. Yet in the series of films about the battle of Sanrizuka, we see scenes which might profitably be used as evidence for the

prosecution if the people were ever brought to trial. The peasants are quite aware of this when they commit dangerous acts, as in a scene where they throw stones at the police; and undeniably much of the underlying tension derives from this flirtation with danger, the awareness of people taking extreme action under the eye of a camera which they completely trust.

This is an essential, and characteristic, aspect of Ogawa's work. At the time when student uprisings were in full cry in Japan and receiving daily news coverage, it was a common complaint that the TV news films were shot from *behind* the forces of law and order (one only ever saw their backs), so that viewers got the feeling they were attending a demonstration on the side of the police. This isn't the case with *Sanrizuka*, where the camera is planted squarely inside the barricades. Similarly in *Sea of Adolescents*, his first film as a director, Ogawa chose to enter the militant groups as a fully paid-up member and to shoot no footage without first getting the permission and the confidence of his group.

Noriaki Hoshi's *The Trenches—Continued*, a documentary sequel to *Sunagawa—The Anti-War Groups in the Trenches* and *The Trenches* (three films on which this young director has spent three years of his life), is a 16mm. film lasting about 50 minutes. It is an extremely lively account of the quarrels between some student militants and the owner of a field in Sunagawa—the battleground for protests against the enlargement of the American base in the 1950s and currently the scene of a fierce campaign against the take-over by Japanese forces of former American bases.

The students' scheme to prevent access to the base by erecting a scrap-iron tower at the side of the runway proves to be not all plain sailing. The land is owned by Aoki, a pacifist peasant who refused to give up his plot when the government bought up the surrounding properties to extend the landing strip, and he's gone so far as to rent it to the students, knowing perfectly well that they intend to dig 'trenches' in it. The idea of a scrap-iron tower, however, strikes him as a little too radical, and he finally calls in the police on the day scheduled by the students for the raising of their tower. The second part of the film consists entirely of interminable discussions between

'Minamata': one of the victims



Aoki and the students, while the police keep watch on the site. Except that he has no power over these particular students, the position of this militant peasant is comparable to that of the 'progressive' university teachers who had recourse to the police when they saw student violence taking their ideas a stage further than they wanted. In both cases, the subtleties of their original positions proved difficult to maintain. The students at Sunagawa must have seen it as a failure that they weren't able to win over this veteran of peaceful resistance. But Hoshi's work is the richer for putting its emphasis on this particular (if to them negative) point of conflict.

Another film distributed by its makers is the extremely long documentary made by the NDU (Nihon Documentalist Union) about low-grade prostitution on the island of Okinawa. *Motoshin kakaranmu*—local dialect for 'you don't need capital in this business' is a montage of conversations with the poorest prostitutes, recordings of their songs, reports on the fights of the 'Zengunro' (the union of Japanese workers on the American base) against being disbanded and on the political battles of the Okinawa students, interviews with black American soldiers and with Japanese tourists from the capital. Previous films on Okinawa had considered the problems of the Ryukyu archipelago in terms of the American presence there; which is to say that they took the easy option of arousing the relatively ineffectual sympathy of the mainland public. The originality of the NDU film lies in concentrating less on the 'occupied/occupier' relations with the U.S.A. than on the basic lack of resources of an island which has become a fertile field of investment for big business from the Japanese mainland. The reality of this 'leased out' island is poignantly described through the voices of its innumerable whores, whose clientele comes from mainland Japan and from the American army.

One can't talk about Okinawa without also mentioning *To Live*, a documentary made by the tiny firm of Mumyosha, and the method which this film's very young makers adopted in their attempt to reconstruct a tragedy from the end of World War II. Watahashito is a tiny island in the Ryukyu archipelago, and half its population committed suicide during the violent fighting which swept this part of the Pacific as the war drew to its close. Interviews with the survivors fail to throw any new light on this tragic incident or to establish any kind of overall perspective. As the film's inquiry proceeds, even the few historical facts which had seemed firmly established (for instance, that it was the commander of the Japanese defence forces who gave the suicide order to the people) begin to appear increasingly doubtful; and the survivors of this collective suicide begin arguing amongst themselves as soon as there is any question of interpreting facts or establishing responsibility. The camera is brought to a standstill by its inability to get closer to an elusive historical reality.

When the film was shown, a pamphlet enumerating each step and setback in the makers' efforts to penetrate the 'Silence of the Survivors' was distributed. One sentence reads: 'We tried to find out what had really

happened, but the further we went and the more new facts were revealed to us, the harder it became to focus our camera on this collective tragedy...' Perhaps their inability to take their researches any further should be interpreted as a failure. What is still admirable is the intellectual honesty behind their admission. The film's narrative form—a teenage boy's travel journal—reinforces the impression of a personal quest*.

It is worth mentioning the public reaction to the phenomenon of these new, independent film companies. Appreciating that it signified the start of something different, the public nevertheless believed for some time that the movement essentially consisted of already famous directors breaking away from the big concerns to set up their own independent outfits. This was certainly true of the first wave; but the next stage found young film-makers leaving the big companies before they had made a name for themselves, and going on to produce some widely acclaimed films. (Koji Wakamatsu, for instance, in the 'blue' movie field; or Shinsuke Ogawa with *Sanrizuka*.) The third and most recent stage has seen the emergence of some very young film-makers who, unlike Wakamatsu and Ogawa, lack the high degree of technical skill gained from working as an assistant in one of the Big Five (*Go-sha*) crews. The makers of *The Trenches—Continued* belong in this third category; and young people are now increasingly forming their own groups, scraping together enough money to make a film of feature length.

Effectively, this new style of independent cinema has its roots in the student film; which, in its turn, sprang from university study groups and film societies which were no longer content to learn film simply by screening movies, reading books and holding group discussions. They have started in the last ten years to make their own films; and graduates from these student movie groups have naturally gravitated towards the new companies—if only for the reason that the decline of many of the big concerns has meant that they are no longer taking on new staff. By creating an impression of continuity—from student films (documentaries about university protests) to independent productions (documentaries about pacifist demonstrations)—their work has woven a new strand in the communications network. We are seeing in Japan, as elsewhere, the rise of one form of 'mini-communications'.

So long as the mass media, in the form of the national press and the radio and TV networks, are unable to provide in-depth coverage of parochial happenings, mini-communications will continue to make this deserted corner of the field its own. Sunagawa is an example of this, in that the big news media did pick up the incident of the scrap-iron tower, but gave it only a tiny fraction of their available space. One of the Japanese mini-communicators' favourite themes is illustrated in Norihiko Onozawa's *Recovery and Liberation*, which records the growing unrest in an adult education school.

*Some of these Okinawan themes—in particular the collective suicide at the end of the war, and the colony of prostitutes—are touched on in Oshima's *Dear Summer Sister*, made in 1972.—Editor.



'Rebellion in the Army'

The television networks were giving a lot of coverage at the time to the student protest movement; but they never actually looked inside any of the schools, let alone the evening classes.

There is growing hostility to the idea of a type of 'cinema' in which knowledge of traditional film-making techniques can actually obstruct the possibility of a new form of expression. For instance, the First Wave directors, who had learned their trade with the big companies, managed to make films which—although relatively very cheap—still required a budget of up to ten million yen. Their successors are making documentaries like *The Trenches—Continued* for only a few hundred thousand.

This sort of budget, minuscule even in comparison with the extremely slender resources of the other independent companies, shapes and limits the work of independent groups like the one which made *Rebellion in the Army*. A number of film enthusiasts formed a team around the central figure of Ujiya Iwasa, who was already known in professional circles, in order to follow every stage in the trial of a young soldier named Konishi. Each of their films lasts approximately half an hour, unedited and with no music, and consists simply of a flat and faithful record of what took place. It is not just a question of trying to produce a film with the little money that is available. To film-makers determined to avoid all forms of subjectivity or artifice, the lack of money can appear a positive advantage.

The supporters of this new style of cinema are not necessarily, as you might expect, the young militants. They are the real film buffs. At a time when the large-scale commercial industry is in a state of acute crisis, fewer and fewer people are going to the cinema. They prefer to see films, from screen classics to topical agit-prop, at lecture hall screenings organised by the film societies which cover the length and breadth of Japan. Things have changed: the idea that anyone can make a film, and the conviction that the significant problems are precisely those which the mass media ignore, are taking hold, mobilising forces which are still of small account but which may nevertheless determine the shape of Japanese films to come.

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Film REVIEWS

The Wedding

In Poland the play by Stanislaw Wyspianski is familiar territory. *The Wedding* reconstructs a marriage which actually took place in 1900 at the village of Bronowice on Poland's borders with Russia and Austria. It was evidently a well-documented affair. The bridegroom was a popular poet, Lucjan Rydel, whose selection of a simple country girl to be his bride was recognised by the Polish aristocracy as a fashionable gesture rather than an affair of the heart. A precedent had been set, a year or so earlier, by the rustic marriage of the leading Polish painter Wladyslaw Tetmajer, to whose small country manor were invited an array of artists and journalists to celebrate this new union between peasant and noble stock. Among the guests was Wyspianski himself, and soon he too was marrying a country girl and settling in the same village. It was a place of uncanny significance to both the past and the future of Europe; situated not far from the fortress town of Cracow, a university surrounded by military training grounds, it was a symbol of national tradition at a time when Russia and Austria were measuring up to each other and the Poles were trying to avoid taking sides. And although Wyspianski did not live long enough to see it, Bronowice was the place where the opening shots of the First World War were fired.

While audiences outside Poland are unlikely to be aware of the historical echoes that resound through Andrzej Wajda's film of *The Wedding* (Pan-European Films), and will certainly miss a fair number of its jokes and references, Wajda's achievement is to make the original event, extraordinary and uneasy as it must have seemed at the time, not only accessible but also hauntingly significant to the present. His film shudders with menace and regret, a lament for the Polish predicament both as it was in 1900 after yet another century of being used as Europe's doormat, and as it is now, its independence as elusive as ever. And setting aside nationalism entirely, *The Wedding* turns out to have its global metaphors as well, defined by the contrasts between the obsessive, raucous celebrations and the forces slowly gathering in the surrounding gloom.

The film begins with a torrent of jubilation and tumbling images before which the spirits shrink; the undisciplined racket and ill-aimed camera seem ugly and inept, an implausible attempt to simulate enthusiasm. But this proves to be exactly Wajda's intention. As the credits appear, the cavalcade of wedding guests leaves the town and passes through fields dotted with troops who stare grimly at the ludicrous cartload going by. Army manoeuvres can be seen on distant hills, heavy weapons are on the move, the air is thick with military purpose. It is a perspective of extraordinary power, and it explains immediately the hysterical fervour of the party-goers. For one night at least, they plan to shut out the world and concentrate on simpler pleasures, if only the world will let them. Townsfolk resorting to country ways as if to a guaranteed rejuvenation, they plunge into the glowing manor-house that awaits them and rouse it to a frenzy of music and colour, an uninterrupted background to nearly two-thirds

of the film. From time to time, individual faces emerge from the tarantella—the bridegroom urging on his guests to even wilder enjoyment, the drunken farmer pursuing a journalist with his opinion of the situation in China, the bridesmaids with their sights set on the best man, the bourgeois and the peasant folk attempting amiably to come to terms through battered fragments of conversation. But for a while, the bedlam is overwhelming in a manner that feels characteristic of East European cinema, typified perhaps by the shots in which bride and groom spin round with the camera in the centre of the floor like characters from, say, Kalatozov or Jakubisko.

Wajda changes the mood by two methods, the soundtrack and a succession of superb exterior shots. As strange discords creep into the music, the characters peer one by one at the mist that has covered the gaunt fields around the house. Occasional figures drift by in its depths as if preparing for attack, horsemen with rifles at the ready, a line of soldiers which the fog transforms back into a row of trees. Struggling out of the night, like despatch bearers from a desperate battle front, come late arrivals to the feast—a Jew and his distracted daughter whose mutterings in French, imprecise warnings, and attempts to join the dance bring it for the first time to a temporary standstill. Finally the girl runs off again across the fields, flapping erratically into the darkness, and her place is taken by other, stranger visitors, conjured from the preoccupations of the wedding guests. The Journalist faces himself in the wisecracking form of a clown from Polish legend, the Poet is haunted by a medieval hero, and the Host, roused from sleep, is visited by an old soldier who hands him the golden horn that will summon the Polish army and bring freedom to them all.

The final sections of *The Wedding*, in which the dawn light finds the house in a trance-like exhaustion, are the Wajda we know well from *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Lotna* (we even witness, once again, the death of the white horse). On the point of marching into battle with their forest of scythes, the peasants abandon the cause and shuffle into another, infinitely weary dance. The golden horn has been lost, only its cord remaining, and a song on the soundtrack points the message before being swamped by harsh electronic rhythms. The promises, the glory, the frantic bursts of patriotic energy have again been defeated, and the marriage of intellect and emotion has failed to bring forth salvation. On the frontier, close by, armies watch each other. At any moment the future will collapse upon us like an avalanche.

'I don't care what happens now, so long as the musicians play!' The cry of the Bridegroom summarises Wajda's mournful indulgence towards his characters. And as with *Everything for Sale* two actors, Daniel Olbrychski and Andrzej Lapicki, represent both sides of the director's own attitude—Olbrychski (the Cybulski figure) the urgent sensualist, all flashing teeth and insane glasses, while Lapicki (who impersonated Wajda in *Everything for Sale*) sourly contemplates a life turned stale. 'Life has been too intricate,' they both agree. 'One should fly from it to dreams.' And *The Wedding* is a fascinating

array of sudden nightmares—the gigantic warrior with a face like blistered mud, the straw men who struggle to accept the invitation to join the party, and the appalling room where severed heads gather in a pile while the murderers are paid by the army with bloodstained coins. Wajda's most disturbing image, however, is that of the house itself, a tiny outpost of warmth in a landscape of freezing terror. It is much the same contrast as between rubbish-dump and ballroom in *Ashes and Diamonds*, and one could argue that Wajda hasn't added to it appreciably except to employ Sobocinski's camera in patterns worthy of Jancsó. But then the situation doesn't seem to have changed much either, since 1900.

PHILIP STRICK

Themroc

Michel Piccoli, red mane flowing and scruffy in his greasy vest, sits in a squalid kitchen making his 6 o'clock breakfast. Fury-like, his elderly mother shuffles in, points tetchily at the clock, and noisily uses the adjacent lavatory. Soon his nubile young sister (Béatrice Romand) enters, dressing gown awry; another roar from decrepit plumbing. Piccoli follows her to her tiny bedroom and savours her nude body, apparently asleep. A cuckoo clock abruptly trills, and Piccoli stomps off to work, his exit timed to the arrival of the dustmen. Piccoli is Themroc, middle-aged worker, and this is his usual start to the day: claustrophobic dreariness, repressed lust, the stern finger of authority and the glib tyranny of time. We follow him to work; mindless solidarity with a neighbour drone as they support each other on their bicycles; cattle-like crowds herding through the stockade of the Métro; the sullen time-clock.

Once inside the factory, this low-key comedy turns a sharp corner into pointed farce. After changing into factory uniform in a room where one side is used by those whose uniforms are white and the other by those who wear yellow—and the border is warily policed—the workers move on to their job, which is to paint the opposite sides of the factory fence. Discovered playing Peeping Tom on the boss and his secretary, Themroc is brought to justice by an obsessively pencil-sharpening official; whereupon he goes berserk, terrifying his guards, and stalks off home to make love to his willing sister, throw his consumer goods out of the flat, and barricade himself in after demolishing the exterior wall. With police and army apparently powerless to cope with this unfamiliar threat to orderliness, who seems impervious to bullets and tear-gas (indeed this 'proletarian hash' turns him on), Themroc is soon out hunting *flics* and carrying back his prey to cook them pig-like on a spit. Whether *pour encourager les autres* or not is never exactly clear, but other courtyard residents are soon joining him to make a cave-man commune.

Claude Faraldo, the one-time worker who wrote and directed *Themroc* (Other Cinema), disclaims any intentional cultural influences or references; but it's difficult not to see the film in the best tradition of farce, descended from the stock characters of the Commedia and with specific echoes of that monument to anti-authoritarianism, Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. Like the awful Père Ubu, Faraldo's authority figures—workers in company uniform, top bosses and policemen (two of them played by the same actor to give theatrical stress to the notion of conformity)—emote in a meaningless language, a kind of nonsense Esperanto. The walls of the factory are plastered with jabberwocky signs, all characterising the inhabitants as 'gentil'. Outside the system there is either wordlessness or a variety of primal scream. Themroc's industrial cough, which begins at breakfast, swells as he revolts into a roar, later inflected by grunts, growls and jabberings.

By eliminating language, Faraldo is apparently aiming to break down for the worker-viewer the social barriers imposed by it; there's no testing that, of course, but what the film does reveal is a potential for a new kind of non-verbal cinema. Here visual gags abound: an alarm clock, jettisoned with the other consumer durables, lands across the courtyard in the room of a sleeping man, where it goes off, springing him puppet-like into the day's routine; the Tati-like insouciance with which Themroc slings his downed policeman over his shoulder; the desperate floundering of the neighbour worker who suddenly discovers that he can't ride a bicycle unassisted. The courtyard itself, a far cry from the lyrical neighbourliness of *Le Jour se Lève*, is alive with running gags. An obsessive car-polisher who keeps one hand on his car while the rest of him is all eyes and ears as he watches for new developments; or the stuffy policeman, busily seducing the women tenants.

Themroc wanders off at self-indulgent tangents, particularly in the scene where the hero strolls along the Métro tunnels, roaring at the trains, or when with a little help from his sister he lures a worker hired to wall him back inside the flat. The repetitions have point in the earlier scenes, where the same shots of workers on the march to work, cut in with Themroc's clock and his mother's warning finger, build to a powerful impression of an urban hell, echoed at the end by a despairing (or polemical?) montage of concrete prisons masquerading as homes. But repeated shots of Themroc's mother hiccupping away are merely tiresome, and even Themroc's anarchy runs out of potential when it is seen increasingly to be reaction rather than anything resembling action. Piccoli's playing is energetically and engagingly boorish (a side which exists by suggestion in his 'bourgeois' roles); but Béatrice Romand is severely restricted in a role which asks of her only to bare an occasional breast and look ecstatic. Breaking the incest taboo may have something to do with advocating sexual revolution as a prerequisite of political revolution; but once the point is made, Faraldo seems only to repeat it with stereotyped sexual fantasies. By the same token, for all its genial energy (and even mindless images of destruction are irresistible at times), the concept of an urban noble savage as an alternative to regimentation is one which might elsewhere be considered counter-revolutionary.

VICTORIA RADIN

Avanti!

Given the jungle law of the film industry, and the depressingly limited options open to the professional film-maker, Billy Wilder, like Hitchcock, has doggedly refused to come to terms with contemporary issues and demands (social or filmic) and instead recalcitrantly returned to his own sources. *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and *Topaz* were both, for their makers, experimental in form and theme; each film gave its director unprecedented formal problems; and both were commercial flops. *Avanti!* (United Artists) and *Frenzy* are reversions to long trusted formulae, with the director in each case engaging himself in re-working by *improving* his earlier themes and style. Both films aim at consolidation rather than gain.

Wilder has taken his title and the basic situation from an unsuccessful Broadway play by Samuel Taylor. He spent two years on his script, working with three other writers before resuming his usual partnership with I. A. L. Diamond. Wendell Armbruster Jr. (Jack Lemmon) flies to Italy to supervise the shipment of his father's coffin back to America, Armbruster Sr. having been killed in a motor accident while taking his annual vacation in Ischia. Wendell repeatedly stumbles across



'The Wedding'

Pamela Piggott (Juliet Mills), a plump English girl, and then discovers to his horror that his father had been enjoying a long-standing affair with her mother, and that the couple had died in the crash together. Pamela's ingenuousness whittles away Wendell's reserve and whiz-kid efficiency, and they gradually recreate their parents' affair. The plot serves as a pure yet attenuated vehicle for Wilder to inventory his effects, and indulge his growing penchant for pushing crazy comedy into lyrical romanticism. The film is a steady crescendo of emotion, not only with the younger couple inheriting the aura left by their parents, but also with Armbruster re-evaluating his father and then (as a classic Wilder hero) himself, rejecting his inherited role. The limpid mood is the one aspect carried over from *Sherlock Holmes*; it shares little with, say, *The Apartment* (where Jack Lemmon undergoes an exactly similar process) but owes a lot to Genevieve Page's romantically signalling parol.

If the core of *Avanti!* is a familiar Wilder statement of a role played to the point where it becomes untenable, then the decorations and

counterpointing are equally characteristic. The film bristles with national stereotypes, American, British and Italian, each fleshed out with succulent political and social gags. In a context safely insulated from the realities of American business society, Wilder offers his most dismissive analysis of the American psyche: Armbruster the industrialist cocooned in right-wing prejudice, with a statutory wife given to making ill-timed long-distance telephone calls and an unthinking acceptance of the implications of being head of Armbruster Industries. ('Work at every Armbruster plant in the country will stop so that 216,000 employees can watch the funeral on closed-circuit TV, in colour. Except for Puerto Rico, who get it in black and white.') The coffin that is eventually flown back to accommodate the plan actually contains Bruno, a hotel valet who fell victim to a *crime passionnel*, posthumously fulfilling his ambition to emigrate. The Italian contingent also includes Carlucci the hotel manager (Clive Revill, as Italian here as he was Russian in *Sherlock Holmes*) with relatives in all the right places, the Neapolitan Trotta family, who hold the corpses

'Themroc': Michel Piccoli, Béatrice Romand





'Avanti!': Jack Lemmon, Juliet Mills, Giacomo Rizzo

to ransom with Pasolinian cunning, a robotic coroner and a cab driver cherishing his own memories of beloved Benito. The role-playing of the principals is told, again as usual in Wilder, in terms of their dress: Wendell switching from his leisure self to his business self by exchanging clothes with a fellow air-traveller, the lovers-to-be wearing their parents' wardrobe, Pamela impersonating a manicurist in Wendell's room and compromised because she's wearing his pyjama top. Movingly, the moment of personality breakthrough comes with Wendell and Pamela in the nude, having swum out to a rock to sunbathe, discussing their unsatisfactory home lives with a new frankness and self-awareness.

Despite the profusion of incident, the film is predominantly languorous in pace and tone. Wilder films an astonishingly high proportion of it in long shot, the images offhandedly composed and yet crowded with detail. He uses camera movement with a restraint that makes a simple tracking shot (Pamela's entry into Wendell's room when she learns that her baggage has been moved there) extraordinarily intense. The method seems to represent a shift in Wilder's attitude to his material (though it isn't rigorous enough to avoid a brief lapse into Negulesco travelogue during Pamela's promenade), as if he were tackling his favoured themes with a greater self-consciousness. The audience is literally distanced from the action while at the same time encouraged to identify with it, which gives the whole exposition an almost diagrammatic quality. Perhaps this is the inevitable corollary of making a film with *Avanti!*'s relative facility of plot, after the more decadent and dangerous territory of *Sherlock Holmes*, where love was glimpsed, savoured, and then sublimated in morphine.

TONY RAYNS

The Day of the Jackal

Frederick Forsyth's novel *The Day of the Jackal* was the sort of bestseller that can be seen coming. In spite of its flat, characterless reporter's style and unsurprising denouement (history insists that the Jackal must fail in his attempt on de Gaulle's life; equally immutable laws of suspense fiction require that at the moment of failure he must have his towering target fairly in his sights), the novel predictably

scooped the pool. There is a very steady appetite for fiction sustained by the apparatus of fact; and Forsyth's ingenious and thorough construction left a strong impression that if the characters were only best cardboard, the buildings and the weapons and the timetables were authentic.

On the screen, particularly when there's a big popular audience in mind, this fascination of fact is undervalued: it's assumed that boredom will set in if we have to spend real time watching the slow sorting of files, the repeated playing back of a tape to get at the sense of mumbled words, the exact craftsmanship of deception and disguise. Kenneth Ross' script for *The Day of the Jackal* (CIC) realises the relevance of processes as well as results, but it still speeds up where it could slow down, establishing a kind of generalised verisimilitude rather than the precision of Forsyth's assiduous detail.

For this particular story the point is important, since essentially what we are watching is two impersonal mechanisms set in motion along a collision course. The Jackal (Edward Fox), an English contract killer hired by the OAS exiles when they realise that the cover of their own operatives has been blown, is the murder machine, moving with implacable capability towards his target. His preparations (not one but three false identities; a weapon made to the most meticulous specifications; spray paint on hand to disguise a car) are those of an actor. He slides in and out of roles, retaining the enigmatic professionalism of a man without a conscience—or at least with no scruples about the innocence of the human obstacles he destroys.

Against him is set the counter-mechanism of the French security forces, somewhat hampered by the imperious unconcern of the man they are out to protect, but still capable of mustering an array of equally effective machine-tools. Squads of British detectives beaverishly explore the Somerset House records to track down a passport application in a dead man's name. An OAS bodyguard is snatched from an Italian hide-out, smuggled across the frontier, and tortured to death; to the interrogation team, the dying man's scream is only another piece in the jigsaw of playback sound. Police Commissioner Lebel (Michel Lonsdale), a rumpled and sceptical loner, more van der Valk than Maigret, unquestioningly taps the telephones of all his colleagues and superiors to check the source of an information leak.

It is somewhat surprising to find Fred Zinnemann, the director for crises of conscience, essaying this cold territory—a kind of *High Noon* without a hero, in which the mechanisms are simply set ticking on their way to the final shoot-out. But the opening sequence, of the OAS ambush attempt on de Gaulle's car at Petit-Clamart, demonstrates that Zinnemann has lost none of his sense of how to diagram an action sequence, letting tension work through the routine of the official afternoon, as the lines of government Citroens take off with their passengers. Some later scenes play on similar equivocations of mood: the testing out of the assassination weapon in a quiet Italian wood, with a pulpy watermelon standing in disturbingly for a human head; or the moment when a homosexual who has picked up the Jackal scurries happily home with his shopping, pleased that he has just glimpsed his new friend's face on a shop-window television screen, innocently curious—and, in an instant, innocently dead.

The film tries to suggest the ironies of a secret contest, a game in which the roles of hunter and hunted are interchangeable, played out just beneath the unruffled surface of everyday occasions. The Jackal, whose brown suits suggest an animal's protective colouring, lurks to snatch a passport among the crowds at Heathrow; a frontier check nets a collection of bored, perplexed tourists, the Jackal being the needle in this haystack of fair-haired men; his encounter with Delphine Seyrig, whom he is later going to kill brutally, is set over the coffee-cups in the staidest of French country hotels. Repeatedly, Zinnemann uses clocks as punctuation marks—not so much to stress time, which only becomes a factor in the final stages, but perhaps simply to emphasise the blank face and the hidden mechanism.

But the film's theory is often better than its practice. Where accuracy is such a factor, it falls down on surprising points—like the failure to give any clear indication of how the Jackal, having tricked his way inside the tightest of police cordons, has planned his escape. There is the old problem of language, always difficult when an aversion to reading subtitles is assumed, but still never solved by the use of English in assorted accents. And, partly because of the language dilemma, there is a general thinness of atmosphere. Compare, for instance, the unmasking of the official who has unwittingly been passing information to the OAS with the similar scene in *Topaz*. Hitchcock's control hinges on an awareness that an audience can be made to shift its sympathies, even against its will, as the camera directs. In *The Day of the Jackal*, the viewpoint is merely neutral: like the Jackal himself, the film is something of a professional without an identity.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

The Heartbreak Kid

Elaine May's second, pale black comedy shares with her first the central situation of the husband who changes his mind. Where in *A New Leaf* Walter Matthau's complacent egoist was grudgingly converted from potential Bluebeard to reluctant lady's maid by the successive manifestations of his bride's guileless incompetence, the title character of *The Heartbreak Kid* (Fox-Rank) travels the same route in reverse. Lenny Cantrow embarks enthusiastically on his marriage with Lila, an over-eager Jewish virgin, but is sufficiently repelled by her lack of social and sexual graces to fall obsessively in love with a WASP tease on the first day of his Florida honeymoon, discard his bride on the spot, and pursue the girl of his sun-drenched dreams all the way to a winter wedding in Minneapolis.

Clearly, a hero incapable of even a furtive compassion and responsive only to appearances is a trickier focus of interest than one who is

busy keeping his velvet hands in their iron gloves. But amoral charmers have proved a rich vein for ironists in the past, and there is— theoretically—no reason why the formula should not work again. Practically, however, there is the insuperable obstacle of Neil Simon's screenplay, which (unlike Elaine May's own script for *A New Leaf*) jerks the characters from one meaty absurdity to the next with only the most cursory nods to motivation.

Although working this time from a short story (by Bruce Jay Friedman), Simon still adopts a remorselessly theatrical structure, dividing his material not so much into three separate acts—honeymoon, courtship and marriage—as three separate dramas, so that his scenario emerges as a kind of 'Son of *Plaza Suite*', badly lacking in ballast and allowing the characters, and our knowledge of them, room to change but never to grow. Where Simon's preference is for brittle repartee and situation comedy, Elaine May's strength lies in the obsessive and affectionate observation of character. And it is precisely the collision of their separate talents which makes *The Heartbreak Kid* such a resistible piece of entertainment, at once too cool to be touching and too touching to be cool.

Which is not to deny that it is—intermittently—extremely funny. Given a script which consists effectively of a succession of two-person exchanges (it is perhaps significant that at the formal dinner for four in Minneapolis, two of the characters maintain an enigmatic silence), Elaine May has clearly drawn on the experience of her revue days with Mike Nichols and (pans along the freeway and self-conscious zooms into the Miami sun notwithstanding) elected to present her film as a series of self-contained sketches, each building to a crescendo which can only properly be followed by a swift dimming of the house lights and a return to zero.

It's a technique which is effective for as long as the first Mrs. Cantrow (played with an admirably undignified gusto by Elaine May's daughter Jeannie Berlin) provides an Aunt Sally for the film's comic missiles. Laying bare her heaving breasts and less attractive idiosyncrasies—tuneless singing and bubble gum on the highway, Milky Way bars and baby talk in the nuptial bed, egg on her face at the breakfast table—she creates an uncomfortably close caricature of the embryonic Jewish momma before being faded out of the plot to enable the hitherto uncommunicative Lenny (who might reasonably have been expected to notice a few of her foibles during their courtship) to set his sights on Kelly Corcoran, the golden girl of every college boy's fantasies.

The sudden change of focus is unsettling: Jeannie Berlin's departure leaves the film in a state of imbalance which is scarcely corrected by the arrival of the inscrutable Cybill Shepherd, while Charles Grodin's Lenny is too elusive a presence to accommodate the shift from passive ingénu to smooth-talking predator. His transformation (like that of Ben Braddock in *The Graduate*) seems primarily determined by the exigencies of the next *scène-à-faire*: in this case a drink with the Corcoran parents over which Lenny, after a casual reference to his four-day-old marriage, formally asks permission to marry their daughter. It's a scene which also recalls that moment in *The Graduate* where the wayward hero asked the husband he had cuckolded for his daughter's hand; though unlike Nichols, who tends to deliver his *coups de théâtre* over the dry martinis, Elaine May generally sets her crucial scenes against the background of a three-course meal. Lenny forces her freedom on a hysterical Lila in the less than intimate setting of a seafood restaurant, and later tries to win the sympathy of Kelly's bland mama by complimenting her over dinner on the sincerity of her potatoes.

The meals are hilarious, but it's in the transitions between them that the film really comes unstuck. Between the Jewish wedding of

the opening minutes and the Christian ceremony which closes the picture, a cluster of loose ends obstinately dangle. What is the implication of the Electra Complex to which the stern patriarch has obligingly confessed to precipitate the 'happy ending'? And what exactly are we supposed to make of the ending itself, with Lenny a stranger at his own feast, quoting the clichés of the Republican press to some unimpressed children and lapsing into the same tuneless hum with which Lila formerly drove him mad? If the message is merely that after you get what you want, you don't want it, it could have been delivered less elliptically. Unlike *A New Leaf*, where the endearingly sloppy and haphazard direction was all of a piece with the central characters, Elaine May's style this time (an unsteady mixture of gauche and fitful chic) underlines the weaknesses of the script rather than of human nature.

JAN DAWSON

THX 1138

Perhaps because writing is such an anti-social business, science fiction deals more with misfits than it does with prophecy. Winston Smith is the most frequent point of reference, but Captain Nemo, Wells' time traveller, Frankenstein or Gulliver would serve as well. Like their creators, they are men for whom dissatisfaction has sunk deep into the bones, stirring them to search, almost blindly, for alternatives. The search, of course, matters far more than its conclusion; I have never been too clear what the Starchild is going to be able to achieve at the end of 2001 (neither has Arthur Clarke; the novel ends with 'but he would think of something'), and identical anticlimaxes are to be found in, to take them at random, *Fahrenheit 451*, *No Blade of Grass*, *Silent Running* or *A Clockwork Orange*. And with *THX 1138* (Columbia-Warner), at last to be glimpsed in London after a couple of years on the shelf, the victory of the toiling misfit, clawing his way up through the underground levels like a hairless oo7 until he staggers into the open air, again seems peculiarly unrewarding. A huge oval sunset behind him, sinking like a punctured balloon, silhouettes his swaying indecision as the credits roll and the occasional bird wallows overhead. From the brightly antiseptic world that had enclosed him and maintained him in drugged contentment, he has escaped to no more than the chill of approaching night. A choir lets

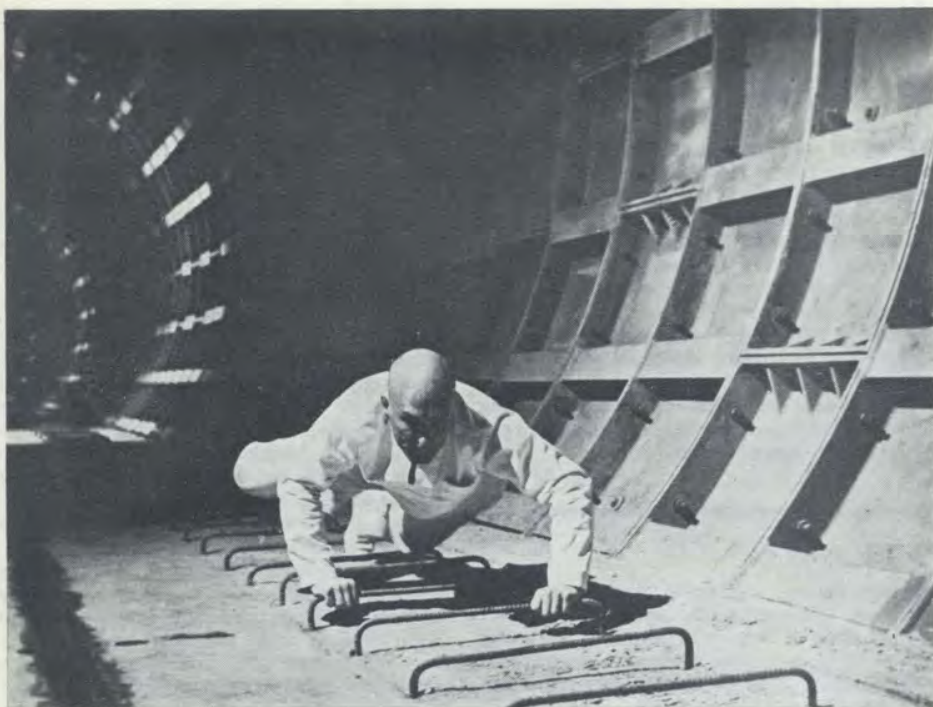
rip on the soundtrack to cheer his spirits, but something stronger is needed for the rest of us.

Feeling back along the thread of the narrative, it's not too difficult to find the points at which logic has become tangled and credibility has snapped. THX (Thex for short) has been driven to rebellion by the loss of his mate, LUH. They had recently discovered sex, which is forbidden and practically unknown thanks to everyone's daily drug intake, and LUH has been liquidated after becoming pregnant. As many a science fiction writer would rush to confirm (Philip Wylie, for example, or Robert Heinlein), totalitarianism just isn't going to work that way; the masses can be kept far more sensibly high on enthusiasm and low on birth-rate by being fed contraceptive pills, thus allowing sex its full measure as a soporific. And it seems a trifle unreasonable, while denying the population their natural functions, to offer them holograms of nude dancers as stimulation. Small wonder that THX, brow furrowed with contradictions, prefers to watch a programme in which truncheons belabour a writhing victim.

In order to rouse THX from conformity, his cell-mate deliberately gives him the wrong drug ration. What puts the idea into her head is not clear. It could be something to do with Donald Pleasence, who claims to have found a way to manipulate the gigantic central computer to suit his own purposes, and seems to have plans for THX as potential revolutionary material. Or it could be just a general conviction that human nature will survive any dehumanising process somehow and that vague flickers of love have illuminated LUH's purpose. The risks within an environment controlled by technology are customarily pointed out with the greatest glee in science fiction, and George Lucas' story is true to form: the fringes of THX's world are haunted by stunted predators who scavenge from the society that excludes them, while unstable equipment and inefficient operators cause frequent explosions in the workshops. In one sudden sequence, a robot walks joltily into a wall, backs off, tries again, and keeps up the attack until someone notices the malfunction. Another shot, naggingly brief, shows a lizard placidly patrolling some electric cables, the message being the impossibility of exterminating *all* random factors. And what finally allows THX his equivocal getaway is the computation that the task-force allocated to pursue him has exceeded its budget and must accordingly be recalled. These signs of essential weakness in a would-be

'The Day of the Jackal': Edward Fox





'THX 1138': Robert Duvall

perfect system are greatly reassuring, but the reassurance is emotive rather than rational—they raise more questions than they resolve.

Does *THX 1138*, then, take us a step further than the classic in this area, *Alphaville*? In theme, Godard leaves Lucas standing: Lemmy Caution's errand of rescue combines brute force with the nostalgia of Eluard, while *THX* has only the vaguest idea of why he's being awkward and charges off in a recalcitrant fast car like the villain of the most conventional *policier*. The performances, too, unforgettable in *Alphaville*, are required to be no more than serviceable in *THX*: Robert Duvall excellently impassive, Pleasence as eccentric as ever, and Maggie McOmie touchingly vulnerable in her lightly freckled scalp. The enduring interest of the film lies elsewhere—in its soundtrack (a multi-layered stir of electronic echoes, in which individual voices are often lost among the simultaneous transmissions), in its editing (by Lucas himself in a style that blinks like the signal lights on a computer bank), and in its settings.

Coming out of Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope studio, *THX 1138* is often stunningly impressive to look at—not because it glitters with hardware in the manner of *2001* but because it so frequently disposes of sets completely and encases its characters in plain white. Cast into prison, *THX* becomes one of a tiny handful of criminals adrift in a bleached vacuum where the only colour is the flesh of face and hands, distances are incalculable and darkness is unknown. The scene has an intensity reminiscent of Beckett, with its futile scufflings and impotent speeches, endlessly repeated. As with the love-making between *THX* and *LUH*, also isolated in an infinity of blankness, Lucas moves his cast like participants in a ballet with formal, almost languid gestures. The sense is strong of private will being submerged beneath an unending exterior control.

Finally, *THX 1138*, like all the best science fiction, has a sense of humour. The mechanical cops are its happiest invention, their heads glowing chromium, their voices glowing too, with mellow tones of reassurance. In the background, a running commentary, blandly cheerful, assesses tolerance levels of men being 'conditioned', genially gives the statistics of the latest disaster, and answers a steady stream of calls for advice with the phrase 'What's wrong?', spoken as though nothing ever took more than a few seconds to put right. When *THX* goes to

his daily confessional to dispose of any worries he may have, he is repeatedly interrupted by words of encouragement and sympathy in a meaningless flow. At such times, *THX 1138* succeeds nicely in using its future to apply scorn to the present; the method may not be new, but it can still work wonders.

PHILIP STRICK

Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex ...

For all the panache with which Woody Allen dashes off sight gags and cinematic puns (everything from *Potemkin* to *Casablanca*), his visual and verbal humour have always jostled for space on the screen. Allen's comedy is joke-oriented, and almost devoutly Jewish joke-oriented. His maladroit hero stumbles through life expecting social and sexual humiliation, and is usually rewarded with disaster. The world crashes about his ears with each mishap, and each gag seems to begin from scratch rather than building from previous situations.

Confessing his unfitness for survival in a constant, self-deprecating monologue, Allen's little man has neither the never-say-die spastic energy which inspired the visual contortions of Jerry Lewis' best comedies, nor the affected 'cool' of Peter Sellers' Inspector Clouseau, skating with a certain bumbling style over the thin ice of total incompetence. Even in his frequent contests with machinery (diabolical plumbing in *Take the Money and Run*, over-elastic exercise equipment in *Bananas*), Allen is not so much a man pitting his wits against impersonal forces as a physically inept creature going down under another onslaught. His comedy has little conventional timing and acrobatic inventiveness. The styleless, graceless collision of situations is precisely the point, and in defeat the hero always retreats with humility, almost gratefully.

Visual parody and throwaway gags follow rather limply in the train of Allen's wisecracking philosophy of frustration, and the parodies and the monologue have yet to meet in a complete movie. *Play it Again, Sam* (adapted from Allen's material but directed by Herbert Ross) is perhaps the least inventive of his films, but it is the most consistent and developed in its humour. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex* (United

Artists), seven sketches on a theme, has been filmed in the direct and unfussy way that Allen has evolved since the first messy camera roving of *Take the Money and Run*. It is a technique which quickly sets up and makes the most of each gag, but which only lends itself to very plain social satire when the verbal humour dries up. In the 'What is Sodomy?' episode, for instance, well-to-do doctor Gene Wilder is discovered in compromising circumstances with a sheep, and descends the rungs of the social ladder with his woolly companion ('You from the hills of Armenia and me from Jackson Heights,' as he puts it); and the only point to the extended 'Are Transvestites Homosexuals?' sketch is the outrage done to potential in-laws when Lou Jacobi is unmasked wearing ladies' frillies.

In other instances, Allen's parody is too straight and literal (the 'What's My Perversion?' TV panel game; the sexual research centre which looks like Frankenstein's laboratory) to be more than intermittently effective. The best episodes gain a lot from Allen's own presence. The humour in 'Do Aphrodisiacs Work?' is again primarily verbal, with Allen throwing off all manner of puns against the vaguely medieval setting (as the court jester pining for a sight of the queen's 'bare bodkin'), or worried that before he can get the queen's chastity belt unbolted 'the Renaissance will be here and we'll all be painting'; and filming one banquet scene in the best amber-toned style of *A Man for all Seasons*.

Allen the worried debater on sexual inadequacy and Allen the pastiche stylist come together most successfully for 'Why do Some Women have Trouble Reaching an Orgasm?', in which the hero wanders restlessly against bleak Antonioni settings, discoursing lengthily—in subtitled Italian—on his wife's frigidity. And there is an enjoyable flair to the final episode, in which the body's vital organs are operated by white-overalled technicians at flashing electronic consoles, with Allen as reluctant sperm, beset by doubts about the whole process ('You hear rumours about this pill these women take'). Allen's new film undoubtedly has an advantage over his two previous features in that it lacks the inconvenience of a plot. But even in an episodic framework, his comic gifts are too wayward to escalate a joke with the convulsive intensity and visual surprise of Jerry Lewis at his best. The classically put-upon little man that is Allen's own screen persona never seems to develop as far as it might, for want of a consistently appropriate context.

RICHARD COMBS



Woody Allen on the block

Cannes Festival

from page 143

The only other really exciting film in a generally disappointing Directors' Fortnight was Denys Arcand's **Réjeanne Padovani**; and oddly enough it also was inspired by Roman history. Arcand tells us that he got the idea for his portrait of corruption in high places by reading Tacitus' account of the court of the Emperor Claudius. (Just as Hawks, he says, thought of *Scarface* as the Borgias in Chicago.) Arcand's film is more like Hawks than Straub, in that the historical references are totally hidden. Someone described it stylistically as an amalgam of Rohmer and Rivette, which is inaccurate but apt. Arcand has, like Rivette, shot almost the whole film indoors, focusing classically on a dinner party as a microcosmic view of Canadian politics. The subject matter, or at least the point of departure, is the inauguration of a motorway, and

Arcand uses this to depict in the quietest and most silvery of tones a really terrifying Watergate-type story.

Unfortunately, there were neither English nor French subtitles, and French-Canadian lingo does pose problems, even for the French. This may have kept the film from being more widely appreciated; and this is a shame, because of all the French-Canadian directors Arcand seems to me the one with the most to say and with the most talent for saying it. This is only his second fiction feature, and I think we can expect a lot more from him.

Electra Glide in Blue is a first film by a young man whose previous experience has been in producing and playing rock records. But James William Guercio is also someone to watch. Not that his first film was perfect—he makes that classic beginner's mistake of having too many endings (at least three too many) as if he just didn't know where to stop. And in this story of a motorcycle cop

(Electra Glide is a make of cycle), his thinking is somewhat fuzzy—in both senses of the word.

Some people found the film slightly Fascist, for Guercio attempts a sympathetic portrait of a short but vital cop who wants to be a detective; but I think it is more confused than Fascist. For example, he finds the end of the film optimistic, though nobody else did. But leaving aside thematic considerations, one has to admit that Guercio has a lot of talent. He handles his actors well and he is pretty good at fitting his figures into the American landscape. Beautifully photographed by Conrad Hall, and scored (as well as written) by Guercio himself, this would have been the perfect film for the Best First Film Prize. Alas, Mme. Bergman and her jury mates thought otherwise, and the gooeey *Jeremy* got it instead. Never mind: we'll be hearing from Guercio again.

RICHARD ROUD

BOOK REVIEWS

MEMO FROM DAVID O. SELZNICK

Selected and edited by
Rudy Behlmer

MACMILLAN, £5.95

A brief review can only hint at the richness of Rudy Behlmer's skilfully edited selection of David Selznick's correspondence and memoranda. Behlmer has had access to the 2,000 box files that contain Selznick's papers, covering his initial period at M-G-M as a tyro producer (1926-28), at Paramount under Ben Schulberg (1928-31), as head of production at RKO (1931-33), back at M-G-M operating his own unit for his father-in-law Louis B. Mayer (1933-35) and finally as an independent producer until his death in 1965. Approximately one-thousandth of the material is here, arranged in chronological sections except for the chapters on the production of *Gone With the Wind* and *Rebecca*. Each section is introduced with a neatly edited autobiographical introduction culled from a variety of published and unpublished sources.

Selective quotation from the book can present Selznick as a ruthless megalomaniac with a streak of cruelty and crudity—brow-beating his employees with lengthy memos, worrying endlessly over trifling details, insisting on getting the \$100 due to him for each slick title he'd suggested to the Paramount front office, instructing his publicity department to

exploit the unaffected innocence of his protégée Ingrid Bergman, firing Cukor, Huston and others overnight, and so on.

A similar process can put him forward as a disinterested genius, a dedicated perfectionist, an unerring industrial prophet. He urged back in 1926 that M-G-M should start a training programme for new directors to make quality two-reel supporting features; he consistently protested against the petty restrictions of the Hays Office Code; he fought to get proper credits for all artists involved in film production; he had original ideas about film music (and urged the Museum of Modern Art to establish a library of film scores for study purposes); he was an innovator in the use of colour movies and the lighting of colour films; and perhaps most importantly, he believed as early as 1930 that the future of American movies lay in breaking down the studio system into small, autonomous units.

It would be glib and misleading, however, to say that the truth about Selznick lies somewhere between these two extreme views. It resides rather in laying one set of facts and impressions over the other, and relating Selznick to the times in which he lived and the background from which he came.

What *Memo from David Selznick* resembles is a massive 18th-century epistolary novel, covering the career of a movie mogul from just

before the coming of sound, when he was emerging as a 'boy wonder', through his brief time of triumph in the 1930s, to his declining years as a reluctantly inactive elder statesman, bitterly disillusioned with a moribund industry. Like an 18th-century novel, Behlmer's book is a work of both moral and practical instruction. Some might unkindly see it perhaps as a Hollywood version of Richardson's *Clarissa*, in which the heroine's letters have been excluded and only those of the cold, calculating seducer Lovelace left; in this reading Clarissa herself could be the debauched art of the cinema. Others might more charitably see Selznick as a flawed hero, more pathetic than tragic, who reached his peak too soon after being driven by twin, interwoven impulses, and finished up the victim of a system he had set out to challenge. The first impulse was to avenge the shattered reputation of his father, the pioneer tycoon Lewis Selznick, who was forced into bankruptcy in 1923 through a combination of his own recklessness and the machinations of his rivals; the second was to make solid commercial movies that met his own high standards of professionalism, bore his personal stamp, and succeeded at the box-office.

This is the way that Selznick himself would no doubt like to be seen. He was a great believer in the idea of Hollywood as a microcosm and in the Hollywood-on-Hollywood film. He produced two major examples of the genre—*What Price Hollywood?* (1932) and *A Star is Born* (1937), and he was the model for the overbearing movie-making genius Jonathan Shields played by Kirk Douglas in *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952), a production of his former employee John Houseman. 'I believed,' Selznick wrote, 'that the whole world was interested in Hollywood and that the trouble with most films about Hollywood was that they gave a false picture, that they

burlesqued it, or they over-sentimentalised it, but that they were not true reflections of what happened in Hollywood.' As befits a Selznick production, Behlmer's book has a vast cast of international stars and, like most Selznick films, an unhappy ending.

We live in a time deeply committed to the notion of—to use the vulgarly fashionable title of a recent American book—'the film director as superstar'. Not only is the director seen as the key figure in the central art of our age, he is also viewed as the protagonist in a contemporary morality play, performing the role of exemplary sufferer. His antagonist is of course the producer, a crude character wearing the cruel mask of naked capitalism. This is a dangerously misleading approach to the cinema, and those reviewers who have interpreted *Memo from DOS* as a self-indictment by a misguided tycoon who spent forty years interfering with the work of dedicated artists have ignored the negative and positive lessons the book has to teach us, as well as missing its complexity. Scott Fitzgerald knew better; he knew that producers are different from us, and not just because they've got to worry about more money.

If ideally the film is a director's medium, the cinema is necessarily a producer's industry. Selznick's life and work reflects the strengths and weaknesses of this situation to an unusual degree. His unremitting energy, his total command of every branch of movie-making, his clear ideas about the kind of intelligent, polished popular entertainment he wished to produce, his ability to articulate his aims—these are qualities that set him apart and made him a man to respect. Many of his analyses of individual pictures and production problems are dazzling in their clarity and cogency: for example, the memo on the draft script of *Rebecca*; his suggestions (most of which were accepted) after seeing a preview of *Gaslight*;

KINO

A History of the Russian and Soviet Film



by JAY LEYDA

From the first filming of the Tsar's coronation in 1896 to the current state of cinema in the U.S.S.R., this is a scholarly, meticulous and highly personalised history of Russian and Soviet film, told of and by the men who made it.

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GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN

his observations on adapting Hemingway and Fitzgerald.

But as an independent producer he deliberately embarked upon projects of such complexity (often unnecessarily inflated and overblown) that only he could control them—and sometimes not even he. While his critical judgment remained acute when applied to the work of others, his faculty of self-criticism declined. Moreover his arrogance and egotism made him increasingly mistrustful of his employees, however much and however sincerely he professed to respect their talent and opinions. He gradually became an impossible person to work for.

'Great films, successful films,' he wrote to Spyros Skouras apropos the 1962 movie version of *Tender is the Night*, the production of which he had been forced to hand over to 20th Century-Fox, 'are made in their every detail according to the vision of one man, not in buying part of what he has done. Often using a portion of his concept is worse than if you had used none at all.' This is true, even if most people would suggest that the one man should be the director if the aim is greatness. But it is also true that the making of any satisfactory or coherent picture depends upon the presence of someone capable of creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which a variety of artists can freely give of their best in a collaborative endeavour. Equally, quite apart from the matter of a producer imposing his will too strenuously upon those working for him, one might well question the very nature of Selznick's 'vision'—not merely to point out its limitations, which were considerable, but to suggest that in artistic terms it can hardly be considered a vision at all.

In very rare moments he seemed to perceive this, and in a touching and uncharacteristically modest memo insisting that the opening festivities for *Gone With the Wind* in Atlanta be toned down, he wrote: 'After all, we have only made a motion picture, and we are only motion-picture people, and the idea of a town receiving us as though we had just licked the Germans is something that I for one will not go through with.' He was, however, being too humble when later in the same memo he remarked that 'the public isn't interested in us as personalities.' Not only is Selznick as interesting as his movies, but as a phenomenon he is more important than any film he made.

PHILIP FRENCH

FILM AS FILM: Understanding and Judging Movies

By V.F. Perkins

PENGUIN BOOKS, 35p

Responding polemically to some of the more antiquated notions found in Rotha, Lindgren, Manvell, Arnheim and others, the title of Victor Perkins' short and engaging

book carries a sympathetic resonance. A major part of his enterprise is to clear away cobwebs from the attics of film theory and lay a few outdated textbooks to rest, and 'Film as Film' adequately summarises the central thrust of his various charges. But as we know, theories are usually debunked to clear the way for newer models, and as soon as Perkins' own theory gets under way, his title begins to seem much more inclusive than anything he claims to offer in his text. Unavoidably, alternate titles come to mind: 'Action as Presentation' or, perhaps more to the point, 'Movie as Movie'.

As Perkins indicates in his preface, 'The examples discussed are not drawn from the (rightly or wrongly) accepted classics of Film Art nor from the fashionable "triumphs" of the past few years, but generally from films which seem to represent what the Movies meant to their public in the cinema's commercial heyday.' What is meant by this is not, say, *Gone With the Wind*, *King Kong* or *Casablanca*, but rather the films of Preminger, Hitchcock, Minnelli, Brooks, Fuller and Nicholas Ray—in short, an abbreviated paraphrase of the pantheon that dominated the pages of *Movie* in the 1960s. (Eisenstein, Huston, Losey, Antonioni and Wyler also figure, but mainly as Negative Examples.)

As one of *Movie's* editors, Perkins can be said to reflect its overall politesse; but it would be a mistake to identify him too closely with the range of tastes that *Movie* has accommodated. If one looks back at a discussion of editorial differences that appeared nearly a decade ago (*Movie* No. 8), where the essential aspects of Perkins' position are already quite evident, it is clear that he represents the most conservative attitude in relation to modern European cinema—sceptical about *Vivre sa Vie*, silent about Bresson, contemptuous of *L'Eclisse*.

By and large, Perkins wants to keep his cinema relatively simple, devoid of all the self-consciousness and most of the paradoxes that are central to modernism; so that it scarcely comes as a surprise when he bypasses Godard's alternate history in *La Chinoise* to describe Lumière's and Méliès' films respectively as 'purely reproductive' and 'purely imaginative'. Elsewhere we learn that 'the director's guiding hand is obvious only when it is too heavy'—a cornerstone in Perkins' theory, and one that necessarily excludes a great deal of cinema from his canon.

Yet within the tenets of his aesthetic, Perkins can function impressively as a critic. In his extended treatment of the camera movements and dramatic organisation of Hitchcock's *Rope*, he offers what is probably the most carefully reasoned and persuasive defence of the film that anyone has attempted, arguing cogently that the camera's mobility effectively shapes the dramatic action rather than tracing an elaborate filigree around it. Equally interesting is a challenge to the popular notion

that all films exist in the present tense: 'If we can describe the movie as existing in any tense at all, then the nearest equivalent is probably the historic present which evokes the vividness of memory or fantasy: "There I am walking along the street, and there's this old man standing on the corner. And then he steps out into the road just as this lorry comes round. . . ."

Other highpoints include a comparison of colour changes in sequences from *Red Desert* and *Elmer Gantry* (the latter praised in contrast to the former for its smooth integration into naturalistic conventions), a parallel comparison of lighting techniques in scenes from *The Criminal* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, and an analysis of what goes wrong in two Elia Kazan/Budd Schulberg films, *On the Waterfront* and *A Face in the Crowd*, when 'coherent thought is sacrificed to the dynamics of narrative,' and 'the personal story overwhelms the political morality-play.'

In other passages, some of the more abbreviated arguments appear less tenable, and contrary evidence often springs to mind. Hitchcock, we're told, casts Cary Grant in 'films (*To Catch a Thief*, *North by Northwest*) whose tones are predominantly light and in which Grant's presence acts as our guarantee that all will turn out well'; but we may wonder why Perkins fails to mention *Suspicion* and *Notorious*, which tend to complicate this premise somewhat. And when Perkins insists that the story of *La Notte* 'is abandoned when it has served the director's purpose but before it has served the spectator's requirements,' he is describing his own requirements, certainly not those of every spectator.

Other quarrels might be raised about the treatment of style in relation to propaganda. *Triumph of the Will* is condemned for 'stylistic grossness', while 124 pages later *Exodus* is praised—implicitly as something other than propaganda—for Preminger's 'detachment-involvement'. But isn't the grossness of Riefenstahl's film more a matter of what it leaves out about Nazism than the brilliantly measured style it employs? (It is a style, after all, that makes the Nazi mentality comprehensible, in a way that, say, *Nuit et Brouillard* does not.) And after we acknowledge the enormous differences between the political issues involved, we might well agree that Preminger 'divides our allegiance between several characters whose interests . . . are sharply contrasted,' but only if we recognise that the viable contrasts offered in *Exodus* are between different forms of Zionism: the entire Arab viewpoint is more or less reduced to John Derek.

Despite such problems, *Film as Film* is a useful book to have around. However restrictive Perkins' theory may seem in relation to the whole body of cinema, it is a theory worth arguing with, and one that permits some valuable critical insights.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

MARION DAVIES, A BIOGRAPHY

By Fred Lawrence Guiles

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It was, on the face of it, a bizarre liaison; and yet in retrospect it seems Hollywood's most romantic love affair. Hearst, the multi-millionaire newspaper magnate, met Marion Davies in 1915, when she was a showgirl in an early Irving Berlin revue, *Stop! Look! Listen!* (Later, out of deference to Mrs. Hearst's feelings and the year or two that in the meantime had been knocked off Marion's official age, it would be put around that it was 1916 or 1917, and *The Follies*.) They remained lovers and inseparable companions (so far as Hearst's business commitments and diminishing family duties permitted) till the day of his death, far on in his eighties, in 1951.

What makes the affair so romantic and so touching is not so much that Marion was the last of the legendary courtesans; that he was immeasurably rich and she was gay and beautiful; that he bought her castles and fame; but that they put up with so much from each other, out of simple love and loyalty. Hearst, the publisher, was of course a monster beside whom Kane was an innocent; but Marion went along quite happily with all he did professionally. It must have been harder that he attempted constantly to dominate her: ruled (and some say ruined) her career; had private detectives follow her around, to justify his acute jealousy. Marion, for her part, was given to humiliating him in public, and to dreadful practical jokes in the way of the place and the period. She filled his houses with wild people and wild parties, was helplessly unfaithful, in deed at least; and, an incurable alcoholic, drank herself into a bloated and premature middle age by the time she was forty. (Her biographer, Mr. Guiles, explains it was actually poor circulation aggravated by drink which made it hard for her to keep her feet in the later years.)

With all this, they stuck together because they seem, behind it all, to have been both of them simple, sentimental, insecure people; and at the same time rather remarkable people. Hearst had undoubtedly a kind of terrible grandeur; and Marion had talent. It is hard to know who did the greater disservice to that talent: Hearst, by giving it protection, promotion and publicity which it probably did not need at all to make its way to the top, and which in the end served only to set up a reaction against her; or Orson Welles, who equated her so unjustly with the untalented, pathetic Susan Alexander in *Kane*. Those who were close to her say that she herself came, in her insecurity, to believe Welles' version: 'I was 5 per cent talent and 95 per cent publicity.'

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No. 16 (Autumn): full study of **WILLIS O'BRIEN**, the man who created King Kong, with many rare illustrations.

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directed her, *The Patsy* and *Show People*—in which her very stylish wit is used to parody not only Hollywood's Golden Era, but the Davies legend itself. It would be nice to have some more evidence of her gifts—perhaps the early talkies before the crackup, in which she was given leading men like Leslie Howard and Clark Gable.

Mr. Guiles may or may not have had access to the films. If he did, he has not made much use of them. He insists on her gifts and her undervaluation, but without much demonstration or argument to prove them. His book is, generally, very long indeed—not really because it contains a great amount of material, but because it is very repetitive. He tells us so many times how unfair is the Susan Alexander portrait, and how red were the critics' faces when they rediscovered the Vidor films, as to have you almost on the point of

screaming.

Perhaps it is this overgrowth of repetition that makes the book seem a little light on new, hard fact (the previously untapped sources to which he has had access include the personal recollections of Marion's nephew Charles Lederer, and her own tape-recorded reminiscences in preparation for an autobiography that was never done). Or perhaps it is that Marion Davies' life—with its continual round of parties and picnics; houses to be chosen and bought and decorated; visitors to be entertained, and the great, from Shaw (who wanted her for Eliza Doolittle) to John Kennedy to be hobnobbed with; shrewd investment, extravagant disbursement and open-hearted charity; with a lot of years of hard work in between—was in its own way an uneventful one.

There are flashes of revelation

in the book, all the same. Glimpses of the irrepressible young Marion who would for laughs black out a couple of teeth before doing a love scene in front of the camera; interesting if inconclusive assessments of the two major scandals in Hearst's life—the death of Thomas Ince and the expulsion from France following the theft of Foreign Office documents (for which Marion claimed responsibility). And there is a vivid enough picture of the old lady, married at last, forgotten by all but a few of the former armies of friends, tumbling her way towards an indecorous but characteristically plucky death by cancer. It's nice to think that her eventual husband may have recalled for her the merriment of the great days, with such pranks as pushing her cantankerous sister into the swimming pool, invalid chair and all.

DAVID ROBINSON

gone into in my book *Cecil B. DeMille: A Biography*, to be published here by Charles Scribner's Sons on October 15th.

Mr. Robinson's other error is in saying that *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* has disappeared. It may have in England, but most American scholars have seen this odd, not unattractive film recently.

Yours faithfully,
CHARLES HIGHAM

New York

Films and Feelings

SIR,—Whilst not wishing to enter the Robert Mundy/Philip French debate (Spring 1973), I think it must be said that French's account there of his review of Raymond Durnat's *Films and Feelings* is hilariously inaccurate. 'I find it a surprisingly sympathetic and charitable review,' says French (why 'surprisingly'?). In fact, he described the book as 'all but unreadable, full of meaningless inverted commas, bafflingly pointless, wild, dubious, chatty, anti-intellectual' (this is Durnat's own précis of the review).

Of course, French did say that 'there are admittedly worse books on the cinema than this' and that 'Durnat is quite capable of fatuities way beyond anything to be found here,' but if that's his idea of sympathy and charity, then I don't think I want it. In reply, Durnat accused French of not being able to read. It is true that they became civil to each other over Luis Buñuel, but the rather conscious 'kiss and make up' air of that debate struck me as being as excruciatingly sentimental as the other had been abusive.

The moral seems to be twofold: (1) Critics are much thinner skinned than artists (which might be one of the reasons why they are critics); (2) they are also rather grovellingly grateful for praise of their own efforts, particularly from someone who has wronged them elsewhere, and touchingly quick to forgive.

If there is one sound more characteristic than the bleat of a

wounded critic, it's his whimper of joy at some recognition. When they're not talking about each other, I admire the work of French and Durnat very much, and expect to hear a bleat or a whimper any day now.

Yours faithfully,
NEIL SINYARD

Birmingham 17

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

STIG BJORKMAN is a Swedish critic and film-maker, editor of the magazine *Chaplin* for more than ten years and director of the documentary about Bergman which was shown at last year's London Festival . . . CHARLES GREGORY teaches literature and film at California State University and also broadcasts regularly about the cinema . . . ROBERT PHILLIP KOLKER teaches in the film division of the University of Maryland. He has written for *Film Comment* and the *Journal of Popular Film* . . . GUY PHELPS has worked for several years at the Leicester University Centre for Mass Communications Research. He is now completing a book on film censorship in Britain . . . TADAO SATO is a critic who helped to promote the Arts Theatre Guild in Japan, an independent distribution system set up by Nagisa Oshima and other Japanese freelance directors. He has written books on Kurosawa and Ozu . . . JOSEPH SGAMMATO teaches English at the City University of New York. He has been studying for an M.F.A. at the film division of Columbia University's School of the Arts and is working on a book on Hitchcock's films.

Sight and Sound

With this issue, the price of SIGHT AND SOUND is increased to 35p a copy; £1.70 for an annual subscription, postage included. As already announced in the Autumn 1972 issue, this has been made necessary by increases over the last two years in paper, printing and postal charges.

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FILMS DU LOSANGE for *La Maman et la Putain*.
THEODOR ANGELOPOULOS/GEORGE PAPALIOS for *Days of 36*.
RAI-RADIOTELEVISIONE ITALIANA for *La Città del Sole*.
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SVERIGES RADIO for *Scenes from a Marriage*.
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RICHARD WILLIAMS FILMS for *The Amazing Nasraddin!*, *A Christmas Carol*, Cresta Commercial, photograph of Richard Williams.
PANEUROPEAN FILMS for *The Wedding*.
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TADAO SATO for *A Summer in Sanrizuka*, *The Trenches—Continued*, *Rebellion in the Army*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *The Mother and the Law*, *His Dog*, *The Covered Wagon*, *Journey's End*, photograph of James Whale.
SECKER and WARBURG for photograph of Grigori Kozintsev.

CORRESPONDENTS

HOLLYWOOD: Axel Madsen
ITALY: Giulio Cesare Castello
FRANCE: Gilles Jacob, Rui Nogueira
SCANDINAVIA: Ib Monty
SPAIN: Francisco Aranda
POLAND: Boleslaw Michalek
INDIA: Amita Malik

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The Hero

SIR,—Apropos the charming piece on Douglas Fairbanks by David Robinson (SIGHT AND SOUND, Spring 1973), I thought your readers might like to know what Doug Jr. said when, on the eve of embarking on his own career as an actor, he was asked by an interviewer if he planned to follow in his father's footsteps.

'That would be impossible,' he replied. 'He was so light on his feet he left no traces.'

Yours faithfully,
HERMAN G. WEINBERG
New York

SIR,—Unlike most film historians, I do not enjoy pointing out the errors of others in the field. But I must mention in the interests of scholarship two flaws in the otherwise valuable article on Douglas Fairbanks by David Robinson.

First of all, he says that *Robin Hood* was the first film designed by Wilfred Buckland. Actually, Buckland had begun with Cecil B. DeMille, for whom he designed, superbly, such important films as *Joan the Woman* and *The Cheat*. He was bitterly dissatisfied with DeMille's constant restrictions on his desire to design not only the sets but also the actual images. They parted company in late 1919; Buckland was replaced by the brilliant illustrator and designer Paul Iribe, whom Jesse L. Lasky imported from Paris. At the time of Buckland's greatest work he was earning only \$75 a week. Later, he committed suicide. If I may be permitted a piece of advertisement, the whole story is

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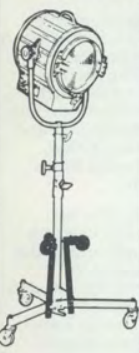
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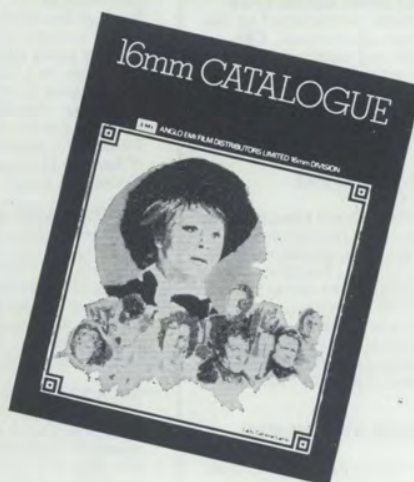
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FILM GUIDE

****AVANTI! (United Artists)**
Billy Wilder indulges Samuel Taylor's play in all its necrological subplotting detail, a four-sided romance in which the influence of the dear departed eventually wins out over bureaucracy and business schedules. Some exquisitely timed manoeuvres of emotional bluff. (Jack Lemmon, Juliet Mills, Clive Revill.) *Reviewed.*

****BAD COMPANY (CIC)**
Two boys seeking their fortune in a demythified West and finding—very entertainingly—that criminality is the only answer. An engaging first film, halfway between *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Butch Cassidy* though flagging at the end, by scriptwriter Robert Benton. (Jeff Bridges, Barry Brown.)

BEQUEST TO THE NATION (CIC)
Gentle Terence Rattigan enquiry as to whether Lord Nelson, in abandoning wife and poop deck for lusty Emma Hamilton, was a lesser hero for all that. Even Aunt Edna might note a peculiar lack of passion between handdog Horatio and his burping, squawking Emma. (Peter Finch, Glenda Jackson; director, James Cellan Jones.)

****BLANCHE (Contemporary)**
Love's labours lost in Borowczyk's delicious translation of an 18th century novel into a 13th century tapestry of betrayal and courtly intrigue. All the minor detail is carefully picked out in the design, and the drama is poignantly confined by ritual and very solid architecture. (Michel Simon, Lilia Brancie.)

****BOXCAR BERTHA (MGM-EMI)**
Vivid, violent, bitterly lyrical tale of the misfit criminals thrown up by the Depression and the anti-union activities of ruthless railway bosses. Obviously modelled on *Bloody Mama*, and none the worse for it. (Barbara Hershey, David Carradine; director, Martin Scorsese.)

CANTERBURY TALES, THE (United Artists)
Carry On Chaucer, with Pasolini losing the way to Canterbury amid a forest of male genitalia. Witless, graceless, scrappy, it makes *The Decameron* look like a masterpiece by comparison. (Hugh Griffith, Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli.)

****DAY OF THE JACKAL, THE (CIC)**
A brave try at Frederick Forsyth's meticulously researched and awesomely complicated bestseller about an OAS plot to kill de Gaulle. It fails, unfortunately, to remember that the detail is the thing. (Edward Fox, Michel Lonsdale, Delphine Seyrig; director, Fred Zinnemann.) *Reviewed.*

***EMIGRANTS, THE (Columbia-Warner)**
Long, meandering version of a compendium of novels about 19th century Swedish farmers and their troublesome journey to the New World. A Fordian canvas without the Fordian warmth; meticulously assembled, often visually striking, but too cool and distant to be more than marginally engrossing. (Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann, Eddie Axberg; director, Jan Troell.)

GODSPELL (Columbia-Warner)
The gospel according to Tebelak and Schwartz (book by St. Matthew), with a pantomime Jesus and hippie disciples pounding out the rock of ages. Some of the numbers take off, but it's mostly insufferably cute despite junkyard sets and clever work with old slapstick comedy footage. (Victor Garber, David Haskell; director, David Greene.)

***GORGEOUS BIRD LIKE ME, A (Gala)**
Breathless Truffaut comedy about the murderous manoeuvrings of an enterprising slut, not so innocently unconcerned by the trail of death and double-cross she leaves behind. Peripherally amusing, but Truffaut is below form and enjoyment will depend on whether you find Bernadette Lafont's performance tirelessly engaging or merely tiresome. (Claude Brasseur, Charles Denner.)

***HEARTBREAK KID, THE (Fox-Rank)**
Sketches for a comedy by Elaine May, directing a Neil Simon script—about a newly married man's predatory pursuit of his dream goddess—which is too fitful to accommodate the quirky observational talent she showed in *A New Leaf*. Sharp and funny when it gives itself time between scene changes. (Charles Grodin, Cybill Shepherd, Jeannie Berlin.) *Reviewed.*

***HEAT (Vaughan Films)**
Sunset Boulevard revisited by some of the Warhol superstars, with Gloria Miles upstaging them all as a fading star rejuvenated by her more than motherly concern for a distracted Dallesandro. Fun and games for camp followers, though others may regret Paul Morrissey's artful varnishing of the rougher Warhol originals. (Pat Ast, Andrea Feldman.)

HITLER: THE LAST TEN DAYS (MGM-EMI)
History as horror comic, with Alec Guinness impersonating the Führer as a paranoid clown and his every boast and threat contradicted by the visual evidence of newsreel. The mix of Belsen and bombast is hard to stomach, and more of a hindrance than a help to historical comprehension. (Doris Kunstmann, Eric Porter; director, Ennio De Concini.)

****HORROR HOSPITAL (Antony Balch)**
Antony Balch's all-out assault on the conventions of the horror movie produces a ghoulish giggle or two in a tale of one of those health resorts where lobotomy turns out to be part of the cure. Reminiscent of early Corman in its camp sense of fun, and appropriately over-acted by most of the cast. (Michael Gough, Robin Askwith, Vanessa Shaw.)

***LADY SINGS THE BLUES (CIC)**
Diana Ross does a nice job on Billie Holiday's voice, but Sidney Furie bloats the lady's already high-powered autobiography into absurd melodramatics. A pity the care over period orchestrations didn't extend to Michel Legrand's contributions. (Billy Dee Williams.)

****LAST TANGO IN PARIS (United Artists)**
Bertolucci's dark, despairing vision of the empty hell of animal sexuality, compressed into a series of anonymous encounters between middle-aged American and young French girl in a vacant Paris apartment. An intense meditation on the realisation of mortality, founded on Brando's overwhelming performance. (Maria Schneider, Jean-Pierre Léaud.)

LOST HORIZON (Columbia-Warner)
Shangri-La remains much the same willow-pattern Disneyland as it was in Capra's version. The arch

pseudo-philosophy, souped up with soporific Bacharach songs, makes one want to grab a spade and give the poor thing a decent burial. (Peter Finch, Liv Ullmann, Sally Kellerman; director, Charles Jarrott.)

****O LUCKY MAN! (Columbia-Warner)**
Lindsay Anderson's epic view of the state of the nation, filtered through the all-purpose adventures of a coffee salesman and his pilgrim's progress from ambition to acceptance. Much incidental insight; a less than certain conclusion. (Malcolm McDowell, Ralph Richardson, Helen Mirren.) *Reviewed.*

***SAVE THE TIGER (CIC)**
A day in the decline of a middle-aged businessman who suddenly finds the ethics of a lifetime lying in ruins. The script is the thing, and Jack Lemmon makes the most of its acerbic humour and regretful nostalgia, but the film takes in a good deal of facile mileage in its hard-driving, one-track course. (Jack Gilford, Patricia Smith; director, John G. Avildsen.)

***SLEUTH (Fox-Rank)**
Olivier shrugs off Caine's acting challenge in an over-faithful adaptation of Anthony Shaffer's whodunwhat about a humiliation contest between a games-obsessed thriller writer and a sexy hairdresser who has pinched his wife. Smoothly directed, but the theatrical flaws are magnified on the screen. (Director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz.)

****SLITHER (MGM-EMI)**
Engaging parody of thrillers past and present, about a mystery tour chase after lost loot. A fine cast responds with amiably deadpan bemusement as the script sends them chasing along circuitous routes after misleading clues. (James Caan, Sally Kellerman, Peter Boyle; director, Howard Zieff.)

***SOYLENT GREEN (MGM-EMI)**
Ecology again in a cautionary tale of things to come (New York in 2022) and the grisly solution of corporate enterprise to a food crisis. Some good moments in the claustrophobic riot scenes, but the pace is checked by a patchwork plot and Richard Fleischer's uneven direction. (Charlton Heston, Edward G. Robinson, Leigh Taylor-Young.)

****STEELYARD BLUES (Columbia-Warner)**
Quizzically funny comedy with amiable bite, about dropout criminals who fancy themselves as old-style outlaws. Post-*M*A*S*H* in tone. Fetching first film by Alan Myerson. (Donald Sutherland, Jane Fonda.)

****SWASTIKA (VPS)**
Hitler demythologised in an intriguing documentary collage of newsreel and home movies shot by Eva Braun. A persuasively assembled study of the banality of evil, though marred by a tendency to easy irony and superfluous moralising. (Director, Philippe Mora.) *Reviewed.*

***TALES OF MYSTERY (Cinecenta)**
Alias *Histoires Extraordinaires* (1967), a trio of Poe stories directed badly by Vadim, coldly by Malle, characteristically by Fellini. Not the treat it should have been, though Fellini's 'Toby Dammit' is worth seeing as a marginal note to his continuing concerns. (Jane Fonda, Peter Fonda, Brigitte Bardot, Alain Delon, Terence Stamp.)

***THAT'LL BE THE DAY (MGM-EMI)**
Instant nostalgia in a flashback to the Fifties, with Teddy Boys, holiday camps and rock-and-roll supplying the sociological surface to a story about a teenage drifter sowing his oats. Enthusiastic

performances and some feeling for the period emerge from a rather aimless script and uncertain direction. (David Essex, Ringo Starr; director, Claude Whatham.)

***THEATRE OF BLOOD (United Artists)**
Vincent Price in splendid Gothic form as a scorned Shakespearean actor taking grisly revenge on the critics who have wronged him. Inventive variations on theatrical death, as good as *Dr. Phibes* until it flags in the last act. (Ian Hendry, Diana Rigg; director, Douglas Hickox.)

****THEMROC (Other Cinema)**
An anarchist cure for the urban malaise, as a Parisian worker (Michel Piccoli, grunting gibberish) downs tools, barricades himself at home and sets up a caveman's commune, feeding off roasted flies. Original and diverting, though it breaks down less walls than it thinks and the idea runs out of steam before the end. (Béatrice Romand; director, Claude Faraldo.) *Reviewed.*

THIEF WHO CAME TO DINNER, THE (Columbia-Warner)

Mildly enjoyable comedy thriller about a compulsive jewel thief who's always one step ahead of the insurance man dogging his tracks. Indeterminately mixes slapstick, satire and suspense with a leavening of casual humour, but likeable and well performed. (Ryan O'Neal, Warren Oates, Jacqueline Bisset; director, Bud Yorkin.)

****THX 1138 (Columbia-Warner)**
A computer-run society in which one shaven-headed nonconformist survives his conditioning. A well-worn theme given spectacular, almost balletic treatment by Coppola's protégé, George Lucas, superbly registering the sense of all-pervading electronic control. (Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasence, Maggie McOmie.) *Reviewed.*

***TOM SAWYER (United Artists)**
Splendidly shot on location, with spirited performances, hummable tunes and no inflation of its folksy humour, this is a surprisingly painless family musical. Unremarkable but really rather enjoyable. (Johnny Whitaker, Celeste Holm, Warren Oates; director, Don Taylor.)

TOUCH OF CLASS, A (Avco Embassy)

Intermittently sprightly comedy about an English divorcee and an American in London and how they turn a brief encounter into a harassed affair. Brightly performed and quite engaging until it fades into rapid variations on a one-note theme. (Glenda Jackson, George Segal; director, Mel Frank.)

****UP THE SANDBOX (Cinerama)**
A Manhattan housewife suffers an identity crisis between the pressures of home and the temptations of Women's Lib. Wildly erratic in its mechanics, though Irvin Kershner's direction keeps it on some kind of course. (Barbra Streisand, David Selby.)

WARM DECEMBER, A (Cinerama)

An amorphous mixture of *Love Story* romance and African politics, both distastefully sentimental and trivialised. Sidney Poitier performs with undeniable charm and obvious relish, but his skills behind the camera are less in evidence. (Esther Anderson, Yvette Curtis.)

****WEDDING, THE (Pan-European)**
His starting-point a riotous wedding feast near the Russian border in 1900, Wajda once again mourns the impotence of Poland with a rich and elaborate allegory. The camera whirls too much and the performances are unrestrained, but the climate of menace and despair is offensively intense. (Daniel Olbrychski, Andrzej Lapicki, Ewa Zietek.) *Reviewed.*

BRANDO

The Unauthorized Biography



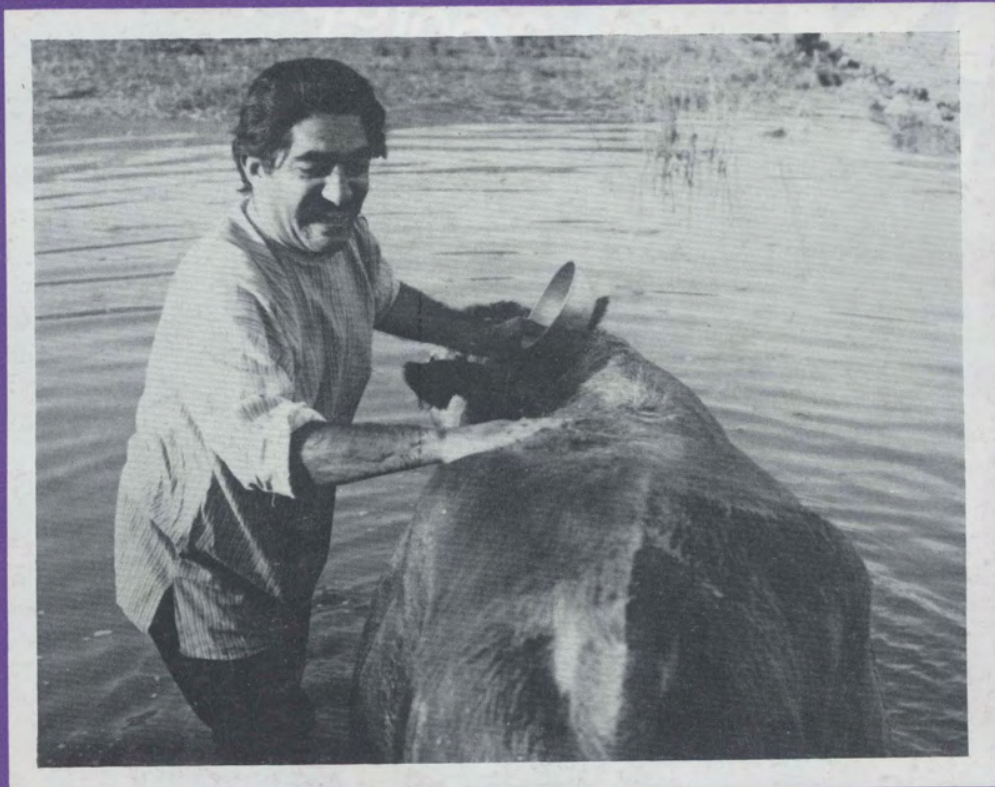
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